MP (1983) Universal

B 9/30/81

JP 9-28-81 — How can any one in films hate TV this much?

VIDEODROME

an original screenplay
by David Cronenberg

is this the sucker that wrote "Wolfen?"

SECOND DRAFT

VERY FUNNY & VERY NASTY — SNUFF makes the big screen —

FILMPLAN INTERNATIONAL INC.
225 East, Roy Street
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Canada

only 1 P.U. for effex

1. INT. PRE-DAWN. MAX RENN'S APT.

We are in a dream - one of Max's video dreams. Max dreams in video images. A lot of distortion, solarization, high contrast switching image play.

The images are disturbing - they seem to be violent and sexual, but the general video distortion makes it hard to be sure. The sound track of the dream also has a TV quality, squawky, overloaded. It's as disturbing as the imagery - are we hearing sounds of people in pain or abstract electronic caterwauling?

Max rolls in his sleep.

The images of his dream dissolve into a clearer video image of a young woman, beautiful in a prissy, puritanical way, telling Max to wake up. The woman is Bridey, Max's secretary, personal assistant, and receptionist. JAMES

Bridey's image becomes distorted, sucked into Max's dream. She begins to scream - or is she singing? - then once again becomes Bridey on Max's TV set in the corner of his bedroom. 1 P.U. on gadgets

A timer has gone off and started a videocorder playing a pre-recorded wake-up message delivered by Bridey with self-conscious brio.

BRIDEY (ON TV)

Max - it's that time again, time to slowly, painfully ease yourself back into consciousness. No, I'm not a dream, although I've been told I'm a vision of loveliness...(GIGGLES TO AN OFFSCREEN AUDIENCE)...I'm nothing less than your faithful Girl Friday, Bridey James with your wakeup call of today, which is Wednesday the 23rd. Got that? (SLOWLY, WITH GREAT EXAGGERATION) Wednesday the 23rd. And I have a message: Remember your meeting at 6:30 this morning with Shinji Kuraki of Hiroshima Video. This meeting is to take place at the Classic Hotel, 483 King St. West, Suite 58, and needless to say, it's your first of the day. Don't you know anyone who works 9-5? Over and out, Commander.

Bridey turns into a logo for something called Civic TV, Channel 83 -

need to v the # of allocations of this # — VERY TOUGH in context

"The One You Take To Bed With You!" The Civic 83 logo, jaunty and cheerfully schlocky, is accompanied by a brash fanfare mixed up to play full volume - Max's alarm. The tape then goes to colour bars and a sign-off tone.

Max is up. He swings his legs over the side of the bed. As usual, he has slept in his clothes. But the dream still lingers. The room, Max's entire field of view, keeps cutting in and out of video texture, flicker and distortion.

1 Good P.O.

Max stands up, turns off the TV set, goes to the can, then to the kitchen. On the way, the place gradually clears to normal film grain - i.e., reality. The aftertaste of that dream has finally disappeared.

Max Renn's apartment is, like Max himself, rumpled and eccentric, enthusiastically dumpy. Max is just under 40, distracted but affable.

While he goes through the ritual of making his morning cappuccino with the battered old espresso machine on his kitchen counter, which sits next to last night's pizza remains, Max looks over a bunch of glossy stills from a Japanese video show. The caption at the bottom of each still reads Samurai Dreams - obviously some kind of soft-core costume effort. Even in the stills it looks cheap and exploitive, laughable.

Max smiles and tries to wipe the tomato sauce stains off the stills. The stains won't come off.

2. INT. DAWN. CLASSIC HOTEL, SUITE 58

The Classic Hotel is a relentlessly scummy downtown flea-bag. Max stands in the dingy hallway. The door of #58 opens cautiously. The chain is still on the door but the screws are pulling out of the wall. The door opens a bit too much and the chain comes loose, screws dangling. Around the edge of the door, peering through the puff of plaster dust, come two very Oriental eyes. An embarrassed smile of recognition, and Shinji Kuraki opens the door for Max. CSRJ

Shinji is a smaller, balding version of Max. He has a sense of humour. He indicates a larger Japanese man sitting at a flimsy card table. The larger man stands up, very formal, very serious, younger than Shinji.

SHINJI

So good to see you again, Max. My associate, Hiro Nakamura. CSRJ

only 1 P.U

There are bows all around. They sit down and share cigarettes and the cheap bottle of scotch which the two Japanese have apparently been working on all night. Max manages the scotch with difficulty but covers his distaste reasonably well. After all, it's not yet 7 AM.

only 1 PU

After a decent pause, Max begins business.

MAX
I looked over the stills. I'm interested. A little bit. How many shows?

SHINJI
Thirteen with the possibility of another six if sales go well.

MAX
You got cassettes?

SHINJI
Of course, Max.

Shinji snaps his fingers at Hiro, who promptly wheels over a cassette machine. Shinji opens a suitcase on the bed. It is neatly packed with ½ inch cassettes. Hiro starts to plug the first one into the machine, but Max waves his hand.

1 cassette PU

MAX
Hold it. Show me the last one. Number thirteen.

SHINJI
(UPSET)
But Max...everything is set up in the first two. You won't understand anything.

MAX
My audience won't see the first two. Show me the last one.

SHINJI
(DEFERENTIAL. MAX IS A BIG CUSTOMER)
Of course, Max.

Shinji says something to Hiro in Japanese. Hiro bows and replaces the first cassette with the last.

Max settles back as episode 13 of Samurai Dreams begins. Shinji quietly draws the curtains closed - whether out of paranoia or merely to take some light off the TV screen is not apparent. 1 PU on various shows

Surprisingly, the show has a moderately classy look to it for middle-of-the-road softcore. Max raises his eyebrows and nods in congratulation to Shinji, who bows in appreciation. We find ourselves in the middle of an elaborately costumed period piece involving very discreet, gentle love-making between two Samurai warriors and a very beautiful, fragile Japanese princess. It is charming and mildly erotic.

We pull back from a close-up of the screen to find ourselves...

3. INT. MORNING. CIVIC TV BUILDING. CONFERENCE ROOM

...in the conference room of the Civic TV Building, the general style of which is uncomfortably close to the ratty Classic Hotel we have just left.

Max is watching Samurai Dreams on a monitor with a roomful of his executives and assistants, among whom is his partner, Moses Janoff, and his creative director, Raphael. CSW CSW

MAX
What do you think? Can we get away with it?
Do we want to get away with it?

MOSES
I think Oriental sex is a natural. I think
it'll get us an audience we've never had before.

RAPHAEL
It's just tacky enough, you know?
I like it.

MAX
Tacky enough for what?

RAPHAEL
Tacky enough to turn me on. Too much class is bad for sex.

MAX
Maybe. I dunno. It's soft. There's something too soft about it. I'm looking for something that'll break through, you know? Something... tough. I dunno.

RAPHAEL
(SHRUGGING)
To me, sex is soft. Maybe I'm a sick person.

4. INT. AFTERNOON. HARLAN'S LAB

Harlan has a lab in the basement of Civic TV. The place is jammed with electronic equipment, all of it looking very home-made and army surplus. A large section of the room is devoted to the storage of used office furniture. Harlan is a gangly electronics whiz kid, mid-twenties.

Under a hand-lettered sign on the wall that reads HOME OF THE BUCCANEERS - PIRACY ON THE HIGH FREQUENCIES, and another one that says THIS WAY TO VIDEO BOUTIQUE, with an arrow pointing down at the machine he is now operating, Harlan is spinning the dials of a device that looks like a complex stereo tuner. Max looks over his shoulder.

HARLAN
OK. Here we go.

Harlan leaves the tuner and starts a ¾ inch cassette machine, which plays through a battered monitor sitting on a lopsided metal typing table.

HARLAN
(INDICATING MONITOR)
It'll come through on that. We only got about 53 seconds, so keep your eyes open. They've got an unscrambler scrambler, if you know what I mean. It sensed that we were unscrambling and automatically changed its code on us.

DO WE CARE ABOUT WHAT LIES WITHIN THE REALM OF POSSIBILITY?

MAX
What satellite is it from?

HARLAN
Snooker, I think.

MAX
Country of origin?

HARLAN
Assuming that 53 seconds represents the period of delay, I'd say somewhere in Malaysia. Here we go. This is it.

C4/2

Max now sees 53 seconds of a show which comes through the monitor very distorted and surreal. It immediately strikes him, and us, that it has the tone of his dream in the first scene.

On the monitor a girl, possibly Malaysian, is being strangled to death in a very spare basement or concrete cell. It is very realistic and the camera never flinches. There are no cutaways or camera moves to distract the viewer from the woman's dying face, although the quality of the image is so poor we can at times barely see what is going on. The image disappears abruptly.

HARLAN
That's it. Grotesque, as promised.

MAX
(OBVIOUSLY INTRIGUED)
Can you hang a searcher on it next time it shows?

HARLAN
Already working on it. I was pretty insulted when it just shrugged us off in less than a minute. Interested?

MAX

(CASUALLY) Yeah. Oh, Harlan...
(INDICATES "VIDEO BOUTIQUE" AND "BUCCANEERS" SIGNS)
Could you do something about the labels? This is supposed to be a clandestine operation.

5. INT. NIGHT. TOWN HALL

A public forum show is in progress in the stark, sleek poured-concrete depths of the Town Hall. A panel of guests faces a ragged audience drawn by the topic of debate announced on a backlit screen on stage: TV AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY.

Some of the audience might even have come just to see the show's moderator, Rena King, a local plastic-earnest TV interviewer, whose presence is noted on a backlit panel all her own. CAST

Rena has three guests on her panel: Max Renn, dressed respectably for the occasion; a lady psychiatrist and pop personality in her own right named Nicki Brand; and a TV monitor which sits on a chair identical to those supporting the other guests. CAST

Love it — CAST

On the monitor is the face of Professor Brian O'Blivion, pop media prophet. He looks like and is a cross between Marshall McLuhan and Andy Warhol.

Three remote TV cameras are shooting the show live for one of the networks. Whenever we catch a glimpse of O'Blivion's camera on one of the mobile studio's monitors, we notice that he is always shot loosely, so that we see the TV set, and that he is always neatly subtitled Prof. Brian O'Blivion, as though the name explained the strangeness of his closeup.

The forum is already hitting its stride.

RENA

(TO MAX)
Max Renn...your television station offers its viewers everything from soft-core pornography to hard-core violence. Why?

MAX

(AMIABLY)
Well, it's a matter of economics, Rena. We're small. In order to survive, we have to give people something they can't get anywhere else. And we do that.

RENA
But don't you feel that such shows contribute to a social climate of violence and sexual malaise? And do you care?

MAX
(STILL AMIABLE)
Certainly I care. I care enough to give my viewers a harmless outlet for their fantasies and frustrations. As far as I'm concerned, that's a socially positive act.

Rena swivels around dramatically in her chair to face Nicki Brand, almost catching her as she checks out her hair on one of the monitors. Nicki is rather spectacular-looking and knows it. She's wearing spike heels, red dress slit up to the thigh and open at the front, no bra, chains. The monitor's label for her reads Psychiatrist Brand.

RENA
(TO NICKI, WITH GRAVITY)
What about it, Dr. Brand? Is it socially positive?

NICKI
I think we live in overstimulated times. We crave stimulation for its own sake, we gorge ourselves on it, we always want more, whether it be sexual or emotional or tactile...And I think that's bad.

MAX
Then why'd you wear that dress?

NICKI
Sorry?

MAX
That dress. It's very stimulating. And it's red. You know what Freud would have said about that dress...

NICKI
(LAUGHING)
He would have said that I'm...you know...
and he would have been right. I admit it.
I live in a highly excited state of overstimulation.

MAX
Listen...I'd really like to take you out
for dinner tonight...

RENA
(SEEING HER SHOW CRUMBLE BEFORE HER VERY EYES)
Professor O'Blivion, do you think erotic TV shows
and violent TV shows lead to desensitization, to
dehumanization?

O'BLIVION (ON TV)
(THOUGHTFULLY)
The television screen has become the retina
of the mind's eye.

RENA
(PAUSE. SHE IS CONFUSED BUT WON'T ADMIT IT)
Yes?

O'BLIVION (ON TV)
(PAUSE) That's why I refuse to appear
on television except on television. It's an ethical
imperative, I feel, if not a moral one.

RENA
(QUIETLY DESPERATE)
Yes...
(A QUICK SWIVEL TO FACE NICKI)
Dr. Brand, is Max Renn a menace to society?

NICKI
(GIGGLING. SHE AND MAX HAVE BEEN FOOLING AROUND
OFF CAMERA)
I'm not sure. He's certainly a menace to me.

6. INT. NIGHT. MAX'S APT.

Max and Nicki Brand are making love. She is still wearing her red dress and spike heels.

But Max is having trouble concentrating: Nicki keeps turning into a video image in his arms, complete with scan lines and static and the occasional vertical flip. Nicki senses Max's distracted state of mind.

NICKI
Something I said?

MAX
No. (JOKING) It's just...the brain tumour.

NICKI
Oh. Is that all?

MAX
I think so.

NICKI
Show me where it is and I'll kiss it better.

MAX
Here...just below the belly button.

NICKI
Mm. I see it.
(SHE DISAPPEARS FROM FRAME)

Max tries to get into it but it's not easy - now the whole room is going video except for Max himself. Max looks down at Nicki.

What he sees is somehow mixed up with the 53 second clip Max saw of the violent Malaysian TV show: Nicki is being garrotted in video. It's obviously painful, horrible, but somehow she seems to be loving it.

Max tries to shake off the image. It won't go away. He pulls free of Nicki and slides off the bed.

Nicki sighs and sprawls on her back.

NICKI
I didn't make it better.

MAX
I think I'm getting weird. I didn't used to be weird.

NICKI
Well, don't fight it. It's kinda...sexy. You know?

MAX
(WITH MOCK SUSPICION)
Are you really a shrink?

NICKI
I used to be. I think I've edged over into show biz - but don't tell my listeners that. I've got a radio show. Remember radio?

MAX
Is that the sort of advice you give? "Don't fight it, it's sexy?"

NICKI
Stick around and find out. You might learn something.

SORRY, GUYS —

7. INT. MORNING. KRAM RADIO STATION. STUDIO

Nicki is doing her morning show. She is really putting everything she's got into it, sweating, playing the mike like Mick Jagger, crooning, singing, serious, prophetic, manic...lots more going on than Dr. Joyce Brothers.

And she wears a Rodeo Drive jogging suit so she can sweat and go crazy without worrying about it. It looks good on her.

Max watches her through the glass. He can hear the show through wall-mounted speakers. Lackies are running around plugging in cassettes for commercials and public announcements. Max is impressed.

NICKI (INTO MIKE)
...and I urge you, I beg you...get professional help...

CASS

WOMAN CALLER (OVER SPEAKER)
But it's not me, it's my sister...

NICKI (INTO MIKE)
It's not your sister, it's you, lover...
can't you tell? Isn't that why you called me?
You want help, you need help, you're going insane,
I can hear you disintegrating while you talk to
me, and I think you're going to end up hurting
somebody, I think it might be your sister you're
going to hurt, and then it's going to be you,
you're going to hurt you.
(PAUSE, THEN GENTLY)
I've got your number, haven't I?

WOMAN CALLER (OVER SPEAKER)
(SOBBING QUIETLY)
I hate my sister. I don't want to, it's
ripping me up inside...but I do. I do.

KSHV?

NICKI (INTO MIKE)
Will you call our Distress Centre? Will you call
the KayRAM Distress Centre? They'll tell you where
to get help, lover, and you need it. You
need it now.

WOMAN CALLER (OVER SPEAKER)
(TOTALLY WRECKED)
I will. I will. I will. Thank you, Nicki.
Thank you. Thank you.

8. INT. MORNING. NICKI'S DRESSING ROOM AT KRAM

Nicki's track suit is hanging on the wall. The sounds of a shower come from behind a swinging door. Max leafs through an FM broadcasting magazine as he waits for Nicki to finish her shower.

MAX
(SHOUTING OVER THE SHOWER NOISE)
You're more serious on radio than you are
on TV.

The shower stops.

NICKI (OS)
I think it's because I don't have to worry about how I look on radio.

Nicki looks around the corner into the small office section where Max sits. Her hair is wet.

NICKI
But I'd like to be serious on TV.

MAX
(LOOKING UP, PLEASED BY WHAT HE SEES)
Have you been auditioning for me?

NICKI
I'll do my show in the nude.

Max gets up and steps around the corner. Nicki is wrapped in a flashy KRAM towel.

MAX
I know the nude when I see it. That's not the nude.

NICKI
(DOING THE SHOW)
I sense that you're deeply troubled. C'mon, lover - what is it? What's troubling you?

MAX
(ADVANCING)
The nude, Dr. Brand. I'm troubled by the nude.

Nicki drops her towel.

NICKI
Well, you're going to have to learn to confront your problems.

They embrace. Their embrace dissolves into a video textured embrace, then dissolves again to...

9. INT. DAY. HARLAN'S LAB AT CIVIC TV 4/2

...DISSOLVE TO a different sort of embrace being watched on a TV screen. A young black man is being muscled across an anonymous room by a large hooded man. The black man is half naked and screaming in terror. Two other hooded men appear and help the first clamp the black man to the wall with steel wristlets embedded in the wall.

The first man produces a crude lash made up of a wooden handle and several strands of barbed wire. We cut away to Harlan and Max watching just as the hooded man starts to lash at the black man. WIRE HANGERS?

MAX
When does the plot start to unravel? Who's the black guy? Political prisoner?

HARLAN
There is no plot. It goes on like that for an hour.

MAX
Goes on like what?

HARLAN
Like that. Torture. Murder. Mutilation.

MAX
We never leave that room?

HARLAN
No. It's a real sicko. For perverts only.

MAX
It's brilliant. Almost no production costs, and you can't take your eyes off it. Incredibly realistic. Where do they get actors who can do that?

HARLAN
(RAISING HIS EYES TO HEAVEN)
Help me. I think he wants it.

MAX
C'mon..it's worth checking out. Did you have trouble locking on to it?

HARLAN
Not after I realized that the Malaysia delay was a plant.

MAX
It's not coming from Malaysia?

HARLAN
Can't fool the Prince of Pirates for long.

MAX
Where, then?

HARLAN
Pittsburgh. That's in the USA.

So where are we?

MAX
(DISBELIEVING)
Pittsburgh?

HARLAN
Pittsburgh.

Max turns his eyes back to the atrocities being performed on the TV screen. We see only Max's eyes, but the sound track makes it plain what it is that he sees. It somehow seems even more atrocious coming from Pittsburgh.

10. INT. NIGHT. MAX'S APT.

Max and Nicki have cosied in for the evening. Nicki is idly looking through one of the cardboard cartons which Max uses to keep his videocassettes in. The carton is soggy and falling apart.

Max is mixing drinks. He is too distracted to do it well.

NICKI
Got any porno?

MAX
You serious?

NICKI
Yeah. Gets me in the mood. What's this?
(READING A LABEL ON A CASSETTE)
"Videodrome."

MAX
Torture and murder.

NICKI
(DROPPING THE CASSETTE INTO THE MACHINE)
Sounds great.

MAX
It ain't exactly sex.

NICKI
Says who? Sex covers a lot of ground.

Nicki slinks vamp-like back to Max and pulls him melodramatically onto the couch.

On the TV screen, the title Videodrome appears in simple red letters on a black background.

NICKI
I'm excited.
(DOING AN ACCENT WHILE BARING HER SHOULDER)
Take out your Swiss army knife and cut me - here - just a little.

Max laughs, then notices a few thin cut lines on the offered shoulder. The cuts are relatively fresh.

MAX
(GENUINELY PUZZLED)
Looks like somebody's beat me to it.

NICKI
(STILL FOOLING AROUND)
Mm. Yes. Beat me to it. Please.

MAX
No, really. What are these? I didn't see them yesterday.

A|V
Videodrome starts to roll on the TV screen after a very long hold on the title credit. A South American boy and a Chinese woman are dragged on screen in chains. Although the reception is murky, we can see several hooded men enter the room with implements of torture. Once again, we are reminded of Max's video dreams.

We now watch the reactions of Max and Nicki as the TV sound track carries the suggestion of what they are seeing. Max turns away - it's too much even for him. Besides, who wants to watch TV when you're alone with Nicki? Nicki is startled.

NICKI
God! I don't believe it.

MAX
(GETTING UP, HAPPY TO TURN OFF THE TV SET)
I'll turn it off.

NICKI
(GRABBING HIM AND PULLING HIM BACK)
No! No, it's OK. I can handle it.
(PAUSE AS MAX SETTLES BACK)
Can you get it any clearer?

MAX
It's a pirate tape. They scramble it.

NICKI
Mm. I like it.

MAX
(SURPRISED)
Yeah?

NICKI
(AROUSED)
Mm. Turns me on. I wonder how you get to be a contestant on this show?

MAX
I dunno. Nobody seems to come back next week. What did you say happened to your shoulder?

NICKI
A friend. I think he'd like Videodrome.

MAX
(DISTURBED)
You let somebody cut you? Really?

NICKI
(DREAMILY)
Uh huh. What do you think?

MAX
Wow. I dunno.

NICKI
Wanna try a few things?

MAX
I dunno. You might have to stay on radio if it gets outa hand.

NICKI
Radio's been good to me. Besides, there's always Videodrome.

11. INT. MORNING. CIVIC TV BUILDING

Max moves with ease through the morning chaos of his real home, the Civic TV Building, a ramshackle structure whose architecture is based on the classic rabbit warren: dozens of small offices jammed into each other, spilling their business out into the tall, narrow corridors.

Max, rumpled and unshaven, comments on all the action as he moves through it.

As he passes Bridey's desk, which seems to be sitting where you might normally expect a Coke machine, she grabs him by the sleeve.

BRIDEY
Max, thank God you're here. Masha Borowczyk has been waiting in your office for an hour. What were you doing last night? Didn't you get my message?

MAX
Masha? Oh, no. I don't think I'm ready...

Bridey hands Max her half-drunk cup of coffee and her own half-smoked cigarette.

Cont
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BRIDEY
Coffee. Cigarette.
(POINTING TOWARDS MAX'S OFFICE)
Masha. Go. She's hot to trot.

Max takes the coffee and cigarette.

12. INT. MORNING. MAX'S OFFICE

Max enters his office. It looks a lot like his apartment:run-down and scattered.

Masha, a heavy, fiftyish Czech lady who is overly made up, rises immediately to greet and kiss him. She smears lipstick on his cheek, tries unsuccessfully to dab the lipstick off, and leads him over to the couch, sitting him down as though he were a wayward but beloved child.

MASHA
Max, it's so beautiful to see you. But you look terrible. Tired, exhausted - but excited, alive...I can see it behind the fatigue. So...no. You look great. How are you?

MAX
I'm great. It's good to see you too.

Masha takes out a pack of oval cross-section Turkish cigarettes and lights one. The flame and the cigarette make Max think of something strange that happened last night. He winces. Masha catches it.

MASHA
You have a hangover?

MAX
Stayed up late watching TV.

MASHA
Mm.
(SHE TAKES A DEEP DRAG)
Max: two words. Ready?
(MAX NODS)
Apollo. Dionysus. TV shows
(MAX DOESN'T REACT)
Exciting?

MAX
Um...maybe. Greeks, weren't they?

MASHA
Max...don't joke. Two shows. They go together like this.
(SHE MAKES SOME OBSCURE, VAGUELY OBSCENE HAND GESTURE)

MAX
I have to buy both of them?

MASHA
You will beg me to sell you both of them. Apollo: hard, aloof, cruel; Dionysus: drunken, sensual, orgiastic.
(LEANING FORWARD INTENSELY)
See them...now.

13. INT. MORNING. VIDEO SCREENING ROOM AT CIVIC

A|2

Max and Masha are looking at Masha's two shows. They are both very tacky ancient Greece costume sex shows, ludicrous in the extreme, very soft and inoffensive.

People are constantly moving in and out of the room - privacy is at a premium at Civic. Masha is unperturbed - she's been wheeling and dealing for a lot of years.

Max fast forwards the tape with his remote control unit, checks a few more seconds a little further along, does it again impatiently.

MAX
Masha, does it ever get good?

MASHA
It's all good.

Max sighs, switches off the machine, sits next to Masha and takes her hand.

MAX
Darling, I'm looking for something a lot more...contemporary. I want something that's going to show people what's really going on under the sheets . This stuff is too sweet, too naive. Like you, darling.

MASHA
(COLD, NOT AT ALL SWEET AND NAIVE)
Well...it's your market.

MAX
You know a show called Videodrome?

MASHA
Video what?

MAX.
D-R-O-M-E. Videodrome. Like video circus or video arena. You know it?

MASHA
No.

MAX
It's just torture and murder. No plot, no characters, very realistic. I think it's what's next.

MASHA
Then God help us.

MAX
(SHRUGS)
Better on TV than in the streets.
You interested in tracking it down
for the commission? We think it comes
from Pittsburgh. ✓ Penn. Corp studek

MASHA
(PAUSE)
I'm interested. Let me try.
(PAUSE)
Max...

MAX
Yeah?

MASHA
Did you ever think of producing your
own show? Right here? I'd be your agent.
Worldwide. I could sell subterranean for
you everywhere.

MAX
(LAUGHS)
No. I don't have the temperament.

MASHA
But if you did, what kind of show would
you do? I mean, for the subterranean market.
Would you do Videodrome?

Max smiles, then shrugs.

MAX
I guess we'll never know.

14. INT. NIGHT. KRAM RADIO STATION. STUDIO

Nicki is in her usual sweat-suit at the microphone, but this time Max is sitting beside her with his own set of headphones on. He is the evening guest on Nicki's show, and the voice of a male caller is heard on the studio speakers.

MALE CALLER (OS)
What I'd really like to ask Mr. Renn is... considering the kinds of things he likes to pollute the airways with...I'd like to know...were you a weird kid?

MAX
I was a pretty ordinary kid.

MALE CALLER (OS)
(DISAPPOINTED)
Really? Completely ordinary?

MAX
(TRYING TO BE MORE ENTERTAINING)
Well, let's see...I, uh, I used to dream in video. That was after we got our first TV set. I don't know how weird that is.

MALE CALLER (OS)
How do you dream in video?

MAX
It's like a normal dream except that it feels like you're watching TV. You see the lines, you feel the cathode-ray tube, there's some static... It still happens, only now it's in colour.

MALE CALLER (OS)
I'd like to ask Dr. Brand how she would interpret that. I personally think it's pretty strange.

NICKI
It's possible that Mr. Renn is a little distanced from the workings of his own unconscious mind. Perhaps he can only allow this unconscious dream material to rise to consciousness if it comes disguised as light entertainment - nothing to be taken seriously. The id as sitcom.

LOVE IT

MAX
Very elegant, Doctor. My compliments to the chef.

MALE CALLER (OS)
Well, I watch Channel 83 a lot, Nicki, and after listening to Mr. Renn all night, I have to say I think he needs professional help - real soon.

NICKI
(TURNING ON THE CHARISMA)
We all need help, lover, and that's what I'm here for. I'm Dr. Nicki Brand, and my lines are open for any more calls to Max Renn of Channel 83, Civic TV. Don't let him get away with it, whatever it is - he's here to talk to you right now.

15. INT. NIGHT. MAX'S APT.

Nicki is sitting on Max's sofa, rummaging around in her purse. Max appears at the doorway leading to the kitchen with two drinks in his hands. He's overfilled the glasses and various liquids are running down his wrists and dripping onto the floor.

MAX
Why do we always end up at my place? I'm not set up to entertain.

Max sits down beside Nicki and puts the drinks on the coffee table, where they collect little pools around their bases.

NICKI
I guess it's 'cause we both love the slums. Hey, what about these?

Nicki finds a small square box in her purse and opens it. Inside are a pair of ornate gold earrings. Nicki takes then out and holds them up to her ears.

NICKI
Sexy-crazy?

Max takes the earrings and examines them.

MAX
These are for pierced ears.
(MAX FONDLES NICKI'S EARLOBES)
Your ears aren't pierced.

Nicki smiles and pulls another small box out of her purse.

NICKI
(SMILING)
Not yet. Doing anything tonight?

16. INT. NIGHT. MAX'S BEDROOM

Nicki and Max are naked in bed together. At the foot of the bed, they've set up the TV set and the videocassette player on a small table. In its raised position, the TV set seems to be overseeing whatever goes on in the bed.

On the TV's screen, an episode of Videodrome is unfolding - one which we have seen before.

While Nicki watches TV, Max pierces the first of her ears using a needle and a cork. She is clearly in pain, and just as clearly is enjoying it. Max is a little squeamish, a little too careful at first, but soon gets into it with gusto.

When Max dabs alcohol on her bleeding earlobe she twists around and they start to make love. After a moment or two, Nicki finds the needle and cork in the sheets and gives them to Max. He pierces her second earlobe as they continue to make love.

Every once in a while, Max flashes video as he works over Nicki's ear, somehow confusing himself and Nicki with what's going on in Videodrome. Max shakes it off but it keeps coming back. Soon he stops fighting it, and before long, he's experiencing everything as Videodrome. We slowly DISSOLVE to...

17. INT. NIGHT. LATER. MAX'S BEDROOM

...STATIC on the TV screen. Max switches it off and crawls back to Nicki at the other end of the bed, where she is quietly dozing with one earring in place.

Max dips his finger into the scotch he's been sipping and dabs it onto Nicki's other, unadorned earlobe. She stirs sexily awake. Max licks the scotch and blood off her earlobe.

NICKI
(HALF AWAKE)
Mm. I've created a Frankenstein.

MAX
You can bring me to life any time, Doctor.

NICKI
(PERKING UP)
Mm.
(BECOMING THOUGHTFUL)
Max...?

MAX
Yeah?

NICKI
I'm going away tomorrow. For two weeks. On assignment.
(PAUSE)
Guess where?

MAX
LA.

NICKI
Pittsburgh.

MAX
Fabulous. Don't spend too much time in the sun.

NICKI
No, c'mon. Isn't that where they make Videodrome?

MAX
Harlan isn't sure any more. One day it is, next day it isn't. He's very insecure.

NICKI
Fuck. I was going to audition. I was made for that show.
(PAUSE. MAX IS FALLING ASLEEP. SHE NUDGES HIM AWAKE)
Hey. Sleep when I'm gone. Got a cigarette?

While Max fumbles around for his cigarettes, Nicki scrambles to the end of the bed, rewinds the tape and starts it again. By the time she returns to Max, he's already lit her a cigarette and is watching the long, silent head title for Videodrome with hypnotized stillness.

Nicki reaches for the cigarette, breaking Max's small reverie.

NICKI
Max? Cigarette?

MAX
Huh? Oh, sure.

While she still has Max's attention, Nicki takes a deep drag of her cigarette, then slowly lowers it towards her abdomen. As Max watches in horrified fascination, Nicki starts to burn herself with the cigarette.

Max makes a move to stop her.

MAX
Nicki - don't.

Too late - Nicki gasps in pain, a small, orgasmic gasp, and Max is triggered off into flashing video, completely disoriented.

Nicki takes another drag and then hands the cigarette to Max. She stretches out lusciously. Max can no longer separate his own reality from the TV reality of Videodrome.

NICKI
(SEDUCTIVELY)
You can bring me to life any time, Doctor.

---

18. INT. AFTERNOON. GREEK RESTAURANT

Max is having lunch with Masha at a very pleasant, airy Greek restaurant. Masha seems nervous and exhausted. She smokes a lot.

MAX
So? Business is bad?

MASHA
What makes you think that?

MAX
You look shakey. Exhausted. You hustle too much for a woman your age.

MASHA
Funny. I thought it was keeping me young.

MAX
Then maybe it's something else. You got in touch with our friends in Pittsburgh?

MASHA
In a way. At a distance. The subterranean grapevine.

MAX
And?

MASHA
Max...Videodrome is something for you to leave alone. It is definitely not for public consumption.

MAX
Channel 83 is too small to be considered public.

MASHA
It's still too public. Do you understand me?

MAX
No. What is it? What's the punchline?

MASHA
I think it's dangerous, Max. Videodrome.

MAX
Why? It's Mafia? They do business.

MASHA
It's more...how can I say? More political than that.

MAX
C'mon, Masha! What are we talking about?

MASHA
Videodrome...what you see on that show... it's for real. It's not acting. It's snuff TV.

MAX
(LAUGHING)
Snuff? Where did you learn that?

MASHA
(ACIDLY)
Don't you condescend. I sold the first snuff films from Argentina to Wundercable in Switzerland. I knew the word before you did. But that was all fake. Videodrome is for real.

MAX
I don't believe it.

MASHA
(SHRUGS)
So don't believe.

MAX
I mean, why do it for real? It's easier and safer to fake it.

MASHA
(INTENSELY, ALMOST DISDAINFULLY)
Because it has something you don't have, Max. It has a philosophy. And that's what makes it dangerous.

MAX
Whose philosophy?

MASHA
I don't know. I made sure I wouldn't know.

MAX
Who's selling it?
(MASHA SHRUGS)
Who's buying it?

MASHA
They're looking for outlets in North America. Private cable. Expensive subscribers.

MAX
Tell them I'm interested.

MASHA
(SHAKING HER HEAD)
Maxie...you're not.

MAX
OK, I'll tell them I'm interested. Find me a name to talk to.
(MASHA KEEPS SHAKING HER HEAD)
Sell me a name, and I'll make Apollo and Dionysus part of the package.

MASHA
(LOOKING MAX IN THE EYE)
That hurts me.

MAX
(CHARMING)
The world is a shit-hole, ain't it?

MASHA
(A LITTLE SMILE)
Yes, Max. It is.
(PAUSE)
I'll find you a name.

19. INT. NIGHT. HARLAN'S LAB

Harlan is fooling around with his machinery, getting ready to receive the evening's transmission of Videodrome. The huge, metal-clad fire door is propped open by a decaying wooden letter tray.

Max comes in.

MAX
Harlan...the door was open this afternoon. It's still open.

HARLAN
(AMIABLE)
It's a sweatbox in here, Max.

Max kicks the tray across the room. The door shudders shut.

MAX
Don't fuck me around, Harlan. My partners want me to get rid of you. I keep telling them you're the janitor. One day you'll come back from lunch and you'll be the janitor.

HARLAN
OK, OK. Message received.

MAX
Has it started?

HARLAN
Just.
(CHECKING HIS MONITORS)
Look at that thing track. It's really trying to ditch us. Like one missile chasing another.

Max takes a look over Harlan's shoulder. Two series of blips chase each other over the face of an oscilloscope. The opening title of Videodrome fades up on the monitor.

MAX
Do they know at the other end that they're being chased?

HARLAN
(APPROVINGLY)
Hey, that's pretty good. Sure. If they're monitoring their own track, they'll know something's after them. Otherwise the signal wouldn't have to twist and turn so much.

Harlan takes another look at his monitors and starts twirling some nobs. Suddenly, there is only one, very calm blip on the oscilloscope.

HARLAN
Hey, this is new.

As they watch the monitor, the head title loses its murkiness and becomes crystal clear - like watching Johnny Carson.

MAX
What? Looks quiet.

HARLAN
That's just it. It is quiet. It's letting us lock on. It's not taking evasive action.

On the screen, the title fades out and the usual Videodrome concrete cellar set fades up. A woman is being dragged on camera, struggling, screaming. It's shocking to see the image so sharp. 4|2

HARLAN
Yeah. Steady as a rock. It's like they were beaming it straight into us.

Max's face drains of colour as he watches the screen.

MAX
Oh, God...

Max does a double take. The latest Videodrome victim is unmistakably Nicki Brand. She is being slapped around in close-up, held by the hair by an anonymous assailant. Even Harlan recognizes her.

HARLAN
What the fuck? That's that lady shrink, isn't it? Brand? Nicki Brand?

Max is trying to control himself, trying to figure it out.

MAX
Is this still coming from Pittsburgh? Is it?

HARLAN
(NERVOUS)
I don't know, Max. Each show seems to beam out of a different place.

Nicki's clothes are now being ripped from her body, revealing the small scars, burn marks, welts, cuts that are already there - the hieroglyphics of her sessions with Max.

MAX
(TO HARLAN)
Get out. C'mon. I don't want you to see this.

Harlan hardly realizes that Max is talking to him.

HARLAN
Huh?

MAX
(SCREAMING)
Get the fuck out! Get out! Now!

Max grabs Harlan by the shirt and almost manages to drag him off his tipsy stool. Harlan breaks free violently.

HARLAN
Shit, man! I don't need this..!

Max suddenly stops noticing Harlan's existence. He sits on the stool and watches the monitor obsessively. Harlan turns.

HARLAN
(LEAVING)
You're too fuckin' weird.

As Harlan leaves, slamming the door behind him, Nicki is being whipped mercilessly by two hooded men. She is screaming.

20. INT. NIGHT. MAX'S APT. LIVING ROOM

On his sofa, Max sits watching the Videodrome tape which stars Nicki Brand. He is tense, focussed, obsessively attentive. As he watches, Max begins to scratch in his shirt around his belly button. Before long, he is really raking his skin viciously, seemingly oblivious to what he is doing.

For no apparent reason, Max suddenly gets up and turns off the tape and the TV set. He leans against the set, rubbing his belly gently, sweating.

As he stands there, the hand that presses against the top of the TV set for support begins to sink into the set, as though the set had suddenly turned into some gelatinous, gummy substance.

Startled, Max pulls his hand out of the set and looks at it. The flat of his hand is covered in blood.

Max looks at the set. The depression in the set's cabinet made by his hand is rapidly healing, closing over like a wound seen to heal in time lapse until all seems normal again.

Max wipes his hand on his shirt, then touches the cabinet. It seems to be solid wood-grained plastic once more. He raps on it with his knuckles. Solid. He looks at his hand, his shirt. No trace of blood.

Max is shaken. He wipes both hands on his pants, looks at them. Nothing. He turns, walks over to his closet, fights his way past the clutter of dusty clothes hanging there, and takes down from the hat rack a beautiful little leather case with a handle.

Max takes the case under his arm and goes into the kitchen. He casts a suspicious glance towards the TV set as he goes, holding the case awkwardly as though shielding it from the TV's dark, unblinking gaze.

21. INT. NIGHT. MAX'S APT. KITCHEN

In the kitchen, Max puts the case down on the counter. There is an inscription in gold lettering in the lower right corner of the case: FOR MAX, WHO CAN'T RESIST SHOOTING HIS MOUTH OFF. WITH LOVE FROM DEBORAH.

As Max reads the inscription, he begins to scratch his belly nervously. A pause, and then he unclips the clasps and opens the case.

Inside the case rests an immaculate little Walther PPK automatic pistol surrounded by the elements of a gun cleaning kit - each element in its own neatly moulded compartment. Max takes out the gun, cocks it, checks the breach, releases the hammer gently, puts the gun back in place and starts to undo the cap of the tin of gun oil.

There is a knock at the door. Max looks up guiltily, or perhaps only furtively. He puts down the gun oil and throws a section of newspaper over the guncase, then turns and leaves to answer the door.

22. INT. NIGHT. MAX'S APT. LIVING ROOM

Max opens the door carefully. It's Bridey, all smiles. Max lets her in and locks the door after her. Bridey notices but chooses to ignore it. Bridey takes a videocassette out of her bag.

BRIDEY
Here's your wake-up cassette. You've got a full day tomorrow, starting off with...

MAX
(INTERRUPTING)
What'd they say at CRAM?

Bridey goes over to the tape machine and starts to set up Max's wake-up tape on the timer. She turns on the deck and presses REJECT.

BRIDEY
They said that Nicki Brand is definitely not on assignment for them. She had a month off coming to her and she decided to take it now.

When Max hears the Videodrome cassette pop up, he whirls suddenly and strides over to Bridey, grabbing her arm viciously.

MAX
Don't touch that!

Bridey looks up, startled. Her face begins to flash video. Max seems to feel rather than to see his hand on her arm twitch into video. Max begins to slap her across the face, now entirely in video. Between slaps, Bridey becomes Nicki Brand. Max begins to strangle her. Nicki becomes Bridey. Max is confused. He lets go, grabs her arm again. The video clears away as suddenly as it came. Max is standing with Bridey, holding her gently by the arm. Bridey looks merely startled again.

BRIDEY
Jesus, Max. You scared me. What the hell's wrong with you?

Max lets go of her and begins to scratch furiously at his belly.

MAX
I dunno. I think I'm getting a rash or something.

BRIDEY
(TOTALLY CONFUSED)
What?

MAX
I...are you all right? I...I didn't mean to hit you.

BRIDEY
Hit me? You didn't hit me.

MAX
(NOW EQUALLY CONFUSED BUT COVERING UP)
No...no...I know I didn't...

BRIDEY
Do you want me to stay here? You look awful, Max. Can I get you something?

MAX
No...I...I'm exhausted. I was...in a deep sleep when you knocked. I guess I'm still not all here.
(SMILING WANLY, HOLDING UP HER CASSETTE)
I'll remember to set the timer. Don't worry.

BRIDEY
(VERY CONCERNED)
If you're sure. (PAUSE) Are you sure?

MAX
Thanks, Bridey. Tomorrow.

Max unlocks the door for her and opens it. Bridey pats Max on the cheek.

BRIDEY
Call me if you need me.

Bridey leaves reluctantly. Max closes the door behind her and leans against the door. He starts to scratch his belly under his shirt again - hard.

23. INT. MORNING. CLASSIC HOTEL BREAKFAST ROOM

Max makes his way through the Classic Hotel's Breakfast Room. Although it is late autumn, there are flies buzzing in the raggy folds of the linen curtains surrounding the room.

The Breakfast Room is furnished in early Canadian Tire lawn and pool metal leisure style. Max spots the table he's looking for and, with only the slightest hesitation to draw himself together, heads for it.

Max takes the trio sitting around the round white table - paper mats, no tablecloth - by surprise: Masha is drinking orange juice, possibly with vodka; the two Japanese, Shinji and Hiro, are digging into their steak and eggs with Western gusto.

Masha turns as Max puts his hand on her shoulder. The two Japanese jump up and bow. Max bows in return and they sit down again.

MASHA
Max - you're very early.

MAX
(TO THE TWO MEN)
Shinji, Mr. Nakamura.

SHINJI
Please join us, Max. Steak and eggs - very good.

MAX
Thanks, but all I need for breakfast is a moment with your charming companion. Masha? Please.

Masha searches Max's eyes. It is obvious to her that he's not in the mood to socialize.

24. INT. MORNING. CLASSIC HOTEL LOBBY

Max and Masha sit in the lobby on a musty, half-collapsed couch. Masha has brought her drink with her. As they talk, each movement coaxes a slight swirl of dust out of the depths of the couch. The dust is back-lit by the sunlight which streams in through a greasy window behind them. From time to time, the elevator in front of them stops and opens spastically. There is never anyone in it.

MASHA
I hope you will appreciate me, Max, what I do for you. It's a very tricky business.

MAX
Have you come across the name of Nicki Brand in connection with Videodrome? Nicki Brand. She's a psychiatrist who does a radio show.

MASHA
I found only one name, and I'm not sure how this person is involved.

MAX
Who?

MASHA
Max - you will have to be nice to me for this. Very nice.

MAX
We'll take a shower together. Anytime you say.

MASHA
(LAUGHS, RAISES AN EYEBROW)
You're a little older than I prefer, but...
(SHRUGS)

MAX
(HIS SMALL BURST OF HUMOUR OVER)
Who?

MASHA
A very strange name. I hope I wasn't being made the fool. O'Blivion. That's all I could get. But that's a word in English, isn't it? Does it make sense?

Max closes his eyes and leans back. O'Blivion, the bizarre media prophet. Yes. In a strange way, it makes perfect sense.

25. EXT. DAY. STREET IN FRONT OF CATHODE RAY MISSION

A line-up of winos and derelicts has gathered outside a featureless three-story building which dates from the fifties. Stainless steel letters stuck to the gray brick between the second and third stories proclaims the place to be The Cathode Ray Mission. A sign on the door, hand-lettered but carefully Letraset, says OPEN FOR LUNCH 11:30 AM.

The door is opened by Bianca O'Blivion, who is wearing a vaguely institutional dress-pants affair. After the first few winos file past her, she melts back into the dim light beyond the door.

A bit of a scuffle and shoving match in the middle of the line-up disgorges Max, who quickly finds a place further up the line. Max hasn't really had to alter his shuffling gait, his mode of dress or his shaving habits to fit right in with his new street-mates. In no time, he has shuffled his way through the front door without attracting any attention.

26. INT. DAY. MAIN FLOOR. MISSION

Max enters the Mission vaguely expecting to see long tables serving soup from immense tureens. Instead, he finds an immense, city-square-block-sized main floor which has been divided into cubicles by a motley array of materials ranging from plywood to old office dividers. Each cubicle contains a table, one chair, and a portable TV set mounted on the cubicle wall or bolted to the end of the table. The TV sets are mostly black-and-white, all of them old, probably donated by some charitable organization.

The derelicts are channeled into their cubicles by two matronly women, an old man and a muscular university student who, without saying much, exudes enthusiasm for his work. Bianca, a stern beauty in her early twenties, quietly oversees her small work force.

Max is directed to a cubicle by one of the matrons. The cubicles are all identified by stick-on numbers of various styles, and have been further enhanced by many layers of graffiti.

As Max takes his seat, he notices that his TV set is already on - a variety news show. The volume is set very low and the controls have all been removed, with some of the resulting holes patched with masking tape.

The cubicle is deep enough that sitting at the table effectively blindfolds Max from the rest of the room. He is just in the process of peeking over the top of his cubicle when the other matron appears with a note-pad and pen in her hand.

MATRON
(IN NO-NONSENSE TONES)
Sit down, please.

Max sits. He can't help feeling like a teenager caught fooling around during a very serious high school exam.

MAX
Hi.

MATRON
Have you been here before?

MAX
No, I haven't. It's pretty neat.

MATRON
We have two menus - soup and eggs or veg and eggs.

MAX
(INDICATING CUBICLE)
I eat in here?

MATRON
Yeah. Soup or veg?

MAX
Soup.

MATRON
Fine.
(WRITES DOWN CUBICLE NUMBER AND ORDER)

MAX
Can I get to watch Channel 83?

MATRON
(MILDLY SURPRISED AT THE QUESTION)
You care what you watch?

Max is about to answer but the woman is already gone on to the next cubicle.

Max stands up again. Over the edge of the divider he sees almost everyone settled back and watching his TV set. In one corner, the old man and the student are separating two barely sober drunks who have both jammed themselves into one cubicle.

STUDENT
C'mon, now, boys. You know the rules. No socializing. Just relax and watch TV. C'mon, now.

As Max scans the ground floor, he notices Bianca O'Blivion heading for a small stairway tucked away in the corner nearest him. His eyes follow the stairs upwards, and for the first time he sees a sort of walled-in gallery high above which runs around the perimeter of the building. The gallery wall is interrupted at irregular intervals by windows, some of them curtained off, some of them with mirrored surfaces suggesting that they are one-way glass.

Max slips out of his cubicle and, as unobtrusively as possible, glides through the maze of cubicles until he reaches the foot of the stairway. A sign tied to the iron railing reads STAFF ONLY. Max leans against the railing and waits for Bianca to arrive.

As Bianca approaches him she glances casually over her shoulder to get a fix on her matrons - the guy at the bottom of the stairs could mean trouble. Still, she doesn't hesitate on her way to the stairs, and in fact begins to sweep by Max as though he weren't there. Max steps around behind her.

MAX
Bianca O'Blivion?

Bianca stops three steps up and turns.

BIANCA
Yes?

MAX
I'm Max Renn. I have an appointment with your father.

BIANCA
(VERY COLD)
Why didn't you come in the office door? This wasn't the address you were given.

MAX
I guess I just got swept along with the crowd.

Bianca turns and continues up the stairs. Max follows.

MAX
I'm going to miss my soup.

BIANCA
(WITH NO TRACE OF HUMOUR)
It's navy bean today. Very nourishing. I can have some sent up if you like.

MAX
Maybe next time.

27. INT. DAY. O'BLIVION'S OFFICE

The door to O'Blivion's office opens and Bianca leads Max inside.

The large room - long and narrow - is a weird mixture of mediaeval and high tech: a modern monk's cell full of crucifixes and icons, ornate dark wood and wall hangings ranging in theme from the Crucifixion to the Virgin and the Unicorn.

The modern stuff is mostly related to video - a couple of Sony monitors of industrial quality and quite a bit of one inch video recording and editing equipment.

Bianca moves easily through this very busy room and deliberately positions herself behind its centrepiece - an enormous baroque carved desk writhing with serpents and plant figures. Bianca is small, dark,and delicate. Her demeanour is very, very serious and she is extremely studied in all her movements.

She indicates a heavy wooden and velvet chair for Max to sit down in but Max takes a moment to examine a video camera on a tripod.

MAX
Home movies?

BIANCA
(SITTING BEHIND THE DESK)
My father sends video letters all over the world.

Bianca sits quietly until Max takes her cue and sits down in the appropriate chair. She looks almost childlike behind the mass of the desk.

BIANCA
Why are you here, Mr. Renn? Your secretary said something about a video club you wanted to join. I didn't understand, but I recalled that you were on a talk show with Father. You said some very superficial things.

MAX
Is the Professor here?

BIANCA
I am my father's screen. He may choose to send you a cassette. If he does, which format would you prefer?

MAX
If he does, it's going to make conversation difficult.

BIANCA
(WITH A TRACE OF A SMILE)
My father has not engaged in conversation for at least twenty years. Format?

MAX
Videodrome.

BIANCA
(CONFUSED)
Is that a Japanese configuration?

MAX
You've never heard of it?

BIANCA
No.

MAX
Then there have been serious gaps in your education.
(MAX STANDS TO GO)
Videodrome. Please mention it to your father. He may want to have a conversation.

Max turns and heads for the door. On his way out, he pulls aside the heavy dark drapes that cover one wall. The wall behind the drapes is glass - a huge window which offers an eagle's nest view of most of the main floor.

Below them, the maze of cubicles looks like one level of a wasp nest, with each cell containing one glowing, flickering video-insect egg.

MAX
(TO BIANCA)
I love the view.

Max lets the drapery fall back into place and leaves.

28. INT. AFTERNOON. HARLAN'S LAB

Max is in the lab alone, setting the timer on the video recorder to go off when the next episode of Videodrome is due. Next to him on the counter is a pile of cassettes - all the Videodrome tapes that have been recorded thus far.

Max double-checks the turn-on time against a list in a steno note-pad which is marked VIDEODROME TRANSMISSION PATTERN in Harlan's scrawl. When he is certain that everything's in order, he depresses the TIMER button and then the RECORD/DELAY button.

Max is just about to turn his attention to the stack of cassettes when the door opens and Moses comes in. Max whirls, instantly defensive. Moses' shirt is open and his tie has been loosened - sure signs that he has been presiding over a closed meeting.

Max pauses, then begins jamming the cassettes in a green garbage bag which he first pulls from a nail in the wall and empties on the floor. Moses looks on in disbelief.

MOSES
Bridey told me you came in. What are you doing down here, Max? We've got a board meeting upstairs. You should be there to defend yourself.

MAX
Oh? Am I under attack?

MOSES
Damn right you are. I told you we got trouble over this so-called lab, and what happens to you? You don't even show up at the deli for our off-the-record let's-save-our-ass meeting with Aubrey Reusch.

MAX
What happened to Harlan? Did you fire him?

MOSES
Max - suddenly I don't know who I'm talking to. From what Bridey tells me, you fired him. He's not here because of you.

Max takes a beat, then dumps the last tape into the bag.

MAX
OK, Moses. Out. I've gotta lock up.

MOSES
You come upstairs with me and you talk to the boys.

Max takes Moses by the arm and hauls him out of the lab.

MAX
Not today, Moses. You handle it.

Max starts fastening the padlocks - three of them - that he left hanging from their steel loops on the outside of the lab door.

Moses grabs Max by the arm and turns him around to face him.

MOSES
I'm your partner, Max. Don't you push me around.

Max begins to flash video. He tries to shake it off, turning back to the locks again. Moses grabs Max by the arm. The small violence of that gesture sets Max off into total video. He turns around and without hesitation, starts smashing Moses across the face with his fist. Moses goes down. Still in video, Max kicks Moses in the side. Moses, now in a state of near shock, drags himself backwards into a corner under the stairs.

Max closes his eyes. When he opens them, Moses is still cowering under the stairs, but the video has gone. Max smiles, then turns back, fastens the last of the locks, and starts to leave.

As he goes, Moses starts to scream after him at the top of his lungs.

MOSES
You fucking maniac! You asshole! You hit me! You hit me!

Max stops, turns, takes a few steps back towards Moses. Moses panics, tries to push himself back through the wall to get away from Max.

But Max just smiles benignly, holding on to his garbage bag like a flipped-out Santa Claus.

MAX
(SMILING BENIGNLY)
I didn't hit you, Moses. Don't lie to me. I didn't hit you.

Max turns away for the last time and sprints up the stairs leaving an astonished Moses behind.

29. INT. AFTERNOON. MAX'S APARTMENT. BATHROOM

Max lies in his bathtub with a washcloth over his eyes. The tub is huge and quite old, with claws holding balls for its feet. A rickety whirlpool attachment - something like a vintage outboard motor - is clamped to the tub's side at a crazy angle. The machine clanks away, stirring the water into a pathetic semblance of a whirlpool.

Beside the tub stands an oval-topped wooden end table, its veneer lifting and splitting in the humidity of the bathroom. On the table sits a soap dish complete with soggy bar of soap; next to it lies Max's automatic pistol, now in a shoulder holster which is very stiff and new.

Under the water, Max starts to scratch at his belly. He removes the washcloth from his face so that he can see what he is scratching. Through the swirling water, he seems to see a puckered seam running vertically up his belly through his navel. It seems infected, an angry red.

When Max looks more closely, the water begins to take on a video texture. The seam disappears, then fades back again. Disturbing imagery starts to suggest itself within the swirls of the water - Videodrome imagery.

Max switches off the whirlpool and gets out of the tub. There is now no seam up his belly, only a slight reddening caused by his scratching. Max wraps a towel around himself, slings the holstered pistol over his shoulder, and leaves the bathroom.

30. INT. NIGHT. MAX'S APARTMENT. LIVING ROOM

Max sits slouched on his sofa, still wearing nothing but his towel. We see and hear just enough of what he is watching on his battered floor-model Electrohome TV set to know that he is running the Nicki Brand episode of Videodrome again.

Max's hair is now dry and sticking up at odd angles. He holds his pistol in his hand, obliviously running its barrel up and down his belly, following the track of the seam that is no longer visible. The Videodrome cassettes that he took from the lab lie scattered beside him on the sofa and on the floor at his feet, and a coffee cup, half empty, the milk in the cappuccino streaky and scummy, sits on the sofa's arm.

It is apparent that Max has been running over and over the cassettes, looking for something, some clue as to where Nicki might be, or how she connected to Videodrome.

Suddenly, the room twitches video a few times, then stabilizes again. Max begins to scratch his belly with the front sight of the pistol. The barrel seems to catch on something, and Max looks down to see what it is.

To his amazement, Max sees that the seam running up his belly is back, only now the two puckered halves of it have separated slightly to reveal an angry red interior.

Max can't believe it, won't accept it. He gets up, pours himself a Scotch, drinks it, returns to the sofa, sits down again. He looks down at his stomach. The seam is still there. It almost...it couldn't possibly be but it looks as though it's pulsing, open then closed, alive with its own rhythm.

Max takes a deep breath, closes his eyes, massages his neck, opens his eyes. It's still there. He picks up the gun from where he left it on the sofa and pushes at the seam with the barrel.

To Max's horror, the gun slips right into the seam and out of sight, and his hand goes with it right up to the wrist. Wide-eyed, suppressing a scream, Max tries to pull the gun out of his body.

The seam closes around Max's wrist like a toothless mouth. He can't get his hand out of his guts. Max staggers to his feet. He looks around the room wildly, desperate for some kind of reality. This can't be happening.

MAX
No. No. C'mon, now. No no no...

Without warning, Max's hand slips out of his stomach. He looks down. The gun is no longer in his hand. The seam contracts a bit, then a bit more, then begins to draw in on itself until only a small concavity is left to indicate that it was ever there.

Max reaches down, touches the concavity with trembling fingers. It's just his navel. But the gun...where is it?

Max looks around the room with controlled desperation.The gun can't be in his body. It can't be. Max pulls the cushions off the sofa. Jammed in the corner of the sofa back and the sofa arm is the gun's shoulder holster. But the gun is not in it.

Max looks down at his belly again. It does seem swollen - or does it? Max flattens his hands against his stomach, presses the flesh down, feels for a trace of the gun, a hard metallic lump...

There is a knock at the door. Max starts to laugh. It's too insane. He goes to the door, manages to control his voice.

MAX
Who is it?

BIANCA (THROUGH THE DOOR)
Bianca O'Blivion. If this is an inconvenient time for you, I can come back...

Max slips open the chain lock and pulls open the door - wide. Bianca is standing in the hall, quite self-contained, primly dressed, a leather bag over her shoulder. Her eyes flicker over Max for a beat, but her face registers no surprise at his appearance.

MAX
Very convenient. A very convenient time is what it is.C'mon in.

Max stands aside. The slightest hesitation, then Bianca steps in through the door. Max closes it carefully behind her. He seems to be telling himself to take it easy, don't frighten her off. But Bianca is quite at home. She takes several steps into the room and looks around.

There is even more chaos to be seem than usual - cassettes and sofa cushions all over the floor, the half cup of cappuccino in the process of soaking into the rug...

Bianca turns to Max with a wry smile.

BIANCA
I thought you had taken the trouble to disguise yourself when you came to the Cathode Ray Mission. I see I was mistaken. You must have felt quite at home amongst the derelicts.

MAX
I think it's a style that's coming back.

BIANCA
In their case, it's not a style, Mr. Renn. It's a disease forced on them by their lack of access to the cathode ray tube.

MAX
You think a few doses of TV will help them?

BIANCA
Watching TV will help patch them back into the world's mixing board. The television screen has become the retina of the mind's eye.
(PAUSE)
You look very uncomfortable pressed up against the door like that.

Bianca is undeniably right. Although his tone of voice has been successfully controlled, Max's body language has not: he has flattened himself against the door like a man lashed to a mast during a storm and holding on for dear life by his fingernails.

The room has begin to twitch video. During each twitch, Bianca has turned into Nicki Brand. The room stabilizes again, but Bianca stays Nicki, though dressed like Bianca. Bianca/Nicki takes a cigarette out of her bag and lights it while talking to Max in a very matter-of-fact tone.

BIANCA/NICKI
You have the demeanour of a man who is hallucinating, Mr. Renn.
(PAUSE)
Are you?

MAX
(STILL CLINGING TO THE DOOR)
I think I am. Yes. Is it obvious?

BIANCA/NICKI
To me it is. Just like my father. Before the brain operation.

Two men in hoods come out from behind the sofa and begin to tie Bianca/Nicki up with leather thongs. She doesn't seem to notice. Max breaks out into a cold sweat. He is afraid to move.

MAX
Oh, really? Just what was it that was wrong with him?

One of the hooded men rips open Bianca/Nicki's blouse. There is a vertical seam in her belly, just like Max's. The hooded man plunges his hand into the seam and pulls out a video cassette. He turns and takes a few steps towards Max, holding the cassette out to him. The cassette is smeared with blood.

BIANCA/NICKI
He'll tell you all about it himself... on this. I believe it's in your own Videodrome format.

The hooded man lowers one gloved hand to Max's belly. Max follows his hand down with his eyes. His seam has reappeared. The hooded man pulls the seam open brutally and slams the cassette into Max's body.

Max screams. The room smears video, then goes black.

31. INT. EARLY MORNING. MAX'S APARTMENT: LIVING ROOM

Max's eyes snap open as though a switch inside his head has just been thrown. They are bloodshot. Their pupils contract painfully in the hard light streaming in through the window. The eyes flick around the room.

Max sees Harlan sitting on the floor, the morning paper spread out in front of him. Harlan is smoking a cigarette, very much at home. Max sits up abruptly. Harlan jumps, startled. Max is vaguely aware that he is now wearing his bathrobe and Adidas shorts.

MAX
Harlan? What the fuck are you doing here? What time is it?

HARLAN
(STARTLED)
Jesus..!
(RECOVERS, CALLS OUT TO THE KITCHEN)
Bridey...I think our Max is back.

MAX
(CONFUSED)
Bridey?

Bridey appears at the kitchen door, sees Max and then runs over to him. Bridey kneels and starts to hug Max hard. She is teary-eyed.

BRIDEY
Oh, Max...It was so scary.

MAX
(HUGGING HER BACK)
It's OK, honey. It's OK. What was scary? What's going on?

BRIDEY
I came here to give you your wake-up. I found you lying on the floor. I called Harlan. You were talking really weird stuff.

MAX
Yeah? What?

HARLAN
Your stomach opening up and swallowing things? Does that ring a bell?

Max gently detaches Bridey and leans back against the sofa. He works his jaw, presses his temples.

MAX
(WINCING)
God, my head hurts. It's like a monster hangover.

Bridey stands up, happy to have something concrete to do.

BRIDEY
I'll make you up an icepack.

She waits for a response. There is none. Bridey backs away a couple of steps, then retreats to the kitchen.

HARLAN
What were you doing last night?

MAX
I was watching the tapes - the Videodrome tapes...

Max glances down at the floor. The cassettes are no longer there. Max jumps up. He starts to rush around, frantic.

MAX
Where are they? Where are they?

Max starts to throw things around, pull books off shelves.

MAX
Where the hell are those cassettes?

Bridey watches from the kitchen, terrified at Max's behaviour. She has a fork in her hand which she has been using to hack away at the ice in Max's freezer which, naturally, has not been defrosted in months.

Max storms into the kitchen and starts banging open the cupboard doors. Harlan follows him around helplessly. He shrugs at Bridey, who attacks the ice in the freezer again with something less than enthusiasm. An ice pack isn't going to help.

HARLAN
Max, c'mon. Calm down. Let me help you.

Max suddenly stops, turns around, leans heavily against the kitchen counter.

MAX
(SUDDENLY CALM. QUIETLY)
She took them. That bitch took them.

HARLAN
Who, Max? Who took them?
(TO BRIDEY)
Bridey...relax, will you?

Bridey stops chopping the ice. She starts to cry, quietly.

MAX
She came here last night. Her timing was perfect. I was hallucinating. I blacked out.

Max suddenly remembers something. He looks down at his stomach. Everything seems normal. He presses his hands against his belly. Nothing.

Bridey and Harlan look at each other. Harlan wipes away the tear rolling down Bridey's cheek. Harlan shrugs.

Max steps over to Bridey and takes her by the shoulders. Bridey stiffens.

MAX
Bridey, I've got a gun in this apartment, a small one. Automatic pistol. I want you to look for it. I've lost it. I can't trust myself to find it...

BRIDEY
Max, please don't be so scary. Please.

Max turns away from Bridey to Harlan. Harlan has the same spooked expression on his face that Bridey has, except that he seems to be bracing himself to hit Max if he should suddenly become violent.

Max gives Bridey a gentle little hug, then lets her go. He takes a couple of deep breaths.

MAX
OK. OK. Listen. Something is wrong with me. It's been going on for days. It's getting worse. Like some kind of drug warp.

HARLAN
Yeah. We've been hearing. Moses said you wigged out and hit him.

MAX
Did I?
(SUDDENLY ON THE VERGE OF TEARS HIMSELF)
God. I thought I was imagining it. Talk to him, will you?

HARLAN
Yeah. And you freaked out on me in the lab.

MAX
(HARDER)
No...no. You don't understand. A source... a source has told me that Videodrome is for real. That it's snuff TV. Nicki Brand was murdered on Videodrome, and we saw it. They wanted us to see it. They were telling us to leave them alone. And then they sent somebody to get the tapes back - the tapes that prove they exist.

HARLAN
(EDGY, PLAYING ALONG)
Yeah? Wow. Who took the tapes?

Max takes a beat, looks from Harlan to Bridey. They're not believing him.

MAX
I don't think you should know. For your sake.

BRIDEY
(QUIETLY)
Max, you need help.

HARLAN
Yeah. This is getting kinda...complex, you know?

MAX
(SUDDENLY YELLING)
But you saw it! You saw Nicki Brand die!

Bridey cringes. Harlan grabs Max and yells right back.

HARLAN
I saw a tacky kink show coming outa Pittsburgh. I saw a fucked-up minor media personality moonlighting as an S & M showgirl. What the fuck does that prove?

Harlan lets go of Max and takes a step back from him.

HARLAN
Max, all I know for sure is that you have developed a mental problem, and that you are weirding out every friend you ever had. That's where you've got to start. You need help.

Max leans back against the kitchen counter. His headache is killing him. He smiles a cagey smile.

MAX
Yeah, you're right. I do.

32. EXT. MORNING. CATHODE RAY MISSION

We are close on a black and white TV screen - so close that we are seeing bundles of pure energy. The camera pulls back to reveal a wino eating porridge in a Mission cubicle. He is entranced by the TV screen, which is displaying a very ordinary game show - lots of flashing lights and contestants dressed up in silly costumes. 4/2

A hand reaches into frame and puts down a glass of orange juice. It is the hand of one of the Cathode Ray matrons, and we follow her as she places more glasses of juice from her tray in front of more derelicts in cubicles.

The matron passes by Bianca O'Blivion, they exchange words, and we follow Bianca to the office stairway. Bianca mounts the stairs, pre-occupied. As she nears the top, she notices Max sitting on the top step. He has taken some trouble to look crisp - fresh shave, clean clothes, brushed hair. Bianca stops.

MAX
I dressed up and nobody noticed. That's not very supportive.

33. INT. MORNING. O'BLIVION'S OFFICE

Bianca closes the door to the office and turns to face Max. She studies him carefully, surprised, perhaps, to see him looking so poised and organized.

BIANCA
You're looking very...brisk today.

MAX
I've come to see your father.

BIANCA
(PERPLEXED)
You've watched the cassette I gave you?

MAX
No. It, uh, wasn't compatible. With my system.

BIANCA
I think I'd better show it to you here.

MAX
I'm afraid I misplaced it.

BIANCA
I hope you're not serious. It's irreplaceable.

MAX
So were the tapes you took from my apartment. The Videodrome cassettes.

BIANCA
I didn't take them. I wouldn't want them. They're dangerous, you know.

MAX
(PAUSE)
Where's Professor O'Blivion?

Bianca doesn't answer. Instead, her eyes flick over the surface of Max's face, searching for traces of...what?

Max takes her gently by the shoulders.

MAX
You've seen how upset I can get. Please don't upset me now.

BIANCA
(STILL COOL)
You were rather shakey when I left.

MAX
(HARDER)
Where's Professor O'Blivion?

Bianca pauses, then smiles disconcertingly. She's decided to play with Max, only Max isn't sure what the game is. Bianca indicates a door behind the desk, a door so plain in the otherwise ornate room that Max hadn't noticed it before.

BIANCA
He's in there.

Max lets go of her and walks to the door. He stops, then grabs the doorknob.

BIANCA
I'm afraid he'll disappoint you.

Max pulls open the door. The room beyond is dark and large - its walls lie in the shadows beyond the light splashing in from the office. Max takes a step into the room, finds a light switch and flicks on the lights.

At first glance, the room seems to be a huge library, very spartan in style - concrete floor softened only by a few anonymous throw rugs, floor to ceiling metal shelves all military gray in colour.

Max approaches one of the shelves and sees that it is packed, not with books, but with videocassettes. Max removes a cassette from the shelf nearest him. Bianca joins him in the room as he reads the label on the cassette: THE INFLUENCE OF CINEMATIC TECHNIQUE ON DREAMS AND VISIONS - Feb. 16, 1972.

Max turns to Bianca. There is a strangely soft look in her eye.

BIANCA
This is him. This is all that's left.

MAX
What are you talking about?

BIANCA
Brian O'Blivion died quietly on an operating table eleven months ago.

MAX
The brain problem?

BIANCA
The Videodrome problem.
(PAUSE)
You have it too.

MAX
(CONFUSED)
But he was on the panel show.

BIANCA
On tape. He made thousands of them, sometimes three or four a day. I keep him alive as best I can. He had so much to offer. At the end, he was convinced that public life on television was more real than private life in the flesh. He wasn't afraid to let his body die.

MAX
Tell me about my Videodrome problem.

BIANCA
I suggest you find the cassette I delivered to you. Watch it. Alone.

MAX
What do you know about Videodrome?

BIANCA
My father knows much more than I do. Listen to him.

34. INT. DAY. MAX'S APARTMENT. LIVING ROOM

Max draws the curtains in his living room, creating instant night. He takes the phone off the hook and shoves the receiver under the nearest sofa cushion. He pours himself a Scotch and quickly downs half of it. And then he turns to the TV set.

Max turns the TV set on and switches it to an unused channel which features a lot of static and snow. He sits back on the sofa, sips his Scotch, and stares at the TV screen. His head buzzes with the electrical activity coming in through his eyes.

It doesn't take long before Max realizes that he is scratching furiously at his belly. He sets his drink down on the floor and pulls open his shirt. Sure enough, the puckered vertical seam in his abdomen is back, quivering slightly each time Max's fingernails rake across it.

Max takes a deep breath, then plunges his hand into the slit. It sinks out of sight into his belly. Max closes his eyes. His hand is exploring the strange new world of his body's inner landscape,his right forearm held tightly by the glistening, rippling drawstring muscles of the seam.

Now Max opens his eyes, which go wide with wonder. He has found something. He looks down at his belly and begins to draw out his arm and hand. The pucker widens and narrows with the contours of his arm like a sphincter muscle. Finally Max's hand appears - but there is more to come: the hand is holding something.

The slit makes one last yawning stretch and disgorges a videocassette, drooling a bit of blood with the effort.

Max examines the cassette. It seems to be a normal cassette except that it is soft and warm to the touch and has a subtle pulse which Max can feel through his hand as it lies there. And it breathes, slowly, deeply, regularly.

Max pushes his finger into it. It gives like flesh packed around a boney, machine-like structure. The breathing accelerates a bit at Max's touch, then slows again.

Max pauses, then gets up, plugs the cassette into his videcorder, and turns it on. It begins to unreel like a normal cassette. Max returns to the sofa, feels for his drink, finds it, and settles back to watch.

Standard colour bars fill the screen, jitter around a bit, align themselves, then give way to a medium close-up of Brian O'Blivion sitting at his desk in the office at the Cathode Ray Mission.

O'Blivion is shuffling papers on his desk and seems unaware that the camera is on him. After a beat or two, he looks up, seems surprised at what he sees, then smiles.

O'BLIVION (ON TV)
(TO CAMERA)
Max...I'm so glad you came to me.
I've been through it all myself, you see.

Max shifts a little uneasily on the sofa. How can a taped image be talking directly to him? Max takes a sip of Scotch. The image is waiting for him to say something.

MAX
What...what's going on?

O'BLIVION (ON TV)
Well, you have a nice little addiction going. You have to be careful now.

MAX
Addiction? To what?

O'BLIVION (ON TV)
Why, the Videodrome signal, of course. They got you to start watching, they seduced you, and now you're hooked.

MAX
But how does it work? What does it do?

O'BLIVION (ON TV)
For those who have a natural propensity for its imagery, it's a kind of bio-electronic heroin. Your brain has already become an electron gun. Your retinae have become video screens. Your reality is already half video hallucination. If you're not careful, it will become total hallucination. You'll have to learn to live in a very strange new world.

MAX
My body seems to be changing. Is it really changing?

O'BLIVION (ON TV)
Oh, yes. The brain tumour is undoubtedly forming.

As O'Blivion speaks, a hooded figure appears in the doorway behind the desk, the doorway that leads to the videocassette library at the Cathode Ray Mission.

MAX
That's what happened to you.

The hooded figure now begins to bind O'Blivion to his chair with wide black leather straps. O'Blivion keeps talking, not seeming to notice, not offering any resistance.

O'BLIVION (ON TV)
I had a brain tumour, and I had visions. I believed that the visions caused the tumour and not the reverse. I could feel the visions coalesce and become flesh, uncontrollable flesh.

The hooded figure now produces a garrote and loops its wire around O'Blivion's throat.

O'BLIVION (ON TV)
But when they removed the tumour, it was called Videodrome.

The hooded figure now pulls the garrote tight, beginning to strangle O'Blivion.

O'BLIVION (ON TV)
(STRANGLING)
I...I was...Videodrome's first victim.

The hooded figure drags O'Blivion off his chair, scattering papers and pens as O'Blivion begins to kick spastically. Max stands up unsteadily, swaying on his feet, as O'Blivion disappears behind the desk.

MAX
(STANDING)
But who's behind it? What do they want?

The hooded figure stands into frame again on the TV screen, coiling the garrote and clipping it to its belt. The figure then rips off its hood and smiles at Max. It is Nicki Brand.

She licks her lips, then comes even closer to the camera so that her face fills the entire TV screen. She begins to twist the earring in her right ear, tugging it just enough to hurt, enjoying the small pain.

NICKI (ON TV)
I want you, Max. You. Come to me now.
Come to Nicki.

The room starts pulsing video. Flashes of Nicki's Videodrome episode punctuate her new image on the screen.

Max approaches the TV set, mesmerized. He falls to his knees before the image of Nicki Brand. He presses his forehead against the screen. The electron guns shoot their images directly into his brain. The screen gives under the pressure of his forehead - it has become soft, like the cassette. It has become flesh.

The TV set begins to pulse, throb, and quiver like an animal in heat. The brand name logo is no longer Electrohome, but Videodrome. The logo itself stretches and breathes with the rest of the set.

Max licks the screen, the distorting, stretching image of Nicki Brand. He embraces the set, caresses it, drools on it. The set swells to meet his touches. Max's hand sink into the sides of the set as though they were the buttocks of a voluptuous woman.

The image of Nicki Brand is in ecstasy, as though it could feel Max's embrace. Max puts his lips on the screen lips of Nicki Brand. His face sinks deep into the set, deeper and deeper until there is nothing but blackness.

35. INT. NIGHT. MAX'S APARTMENT. BEDROOM

Max seems to be pulling his head out of the blackness of the TV set but finds himself merely rolling the pillow off his face in his own bed. The bedroom is murky, lit only by the light spilling in from the livingroom. Part of that light is flickering - the huge old Electrohome floor console is on, the speaker murmuring in several voices, not loud enough to really tell whether it's a news show, a sitcom, a cop show.

Max half rises in his bed, just to check that it's only the TV set he's hearing, then collapses in a heap again. Surely it couldn't all be a dream; that would be beyond banality.

MAX
(TO HIMSELF)
What is going on, Dr. O'Blivion?
I mean, really.

Max starts to laugh to himself. He puts his hand to his head to sweep back some strands of hair that have fallen across his forehead. The strands of hair are gray; they have an unfamiliarly rough, thick texture.

Max stops laughing. The hair is not his. He sits bolt upright in bed again. Right next to him lies a still form, hidden under the covers except for a stream of long gray hair that has fallen onto his side of the bed. Max starts to sweat. His heart pounds.

He reaches for the covers and pulls them back, gently, slightly, to reveal the head and shoulders of a woman. The woman's back is to Max. Max gently takes the form by the shoulder and rolls it over. To his horror he sees that it is Masha, her eyes half-open, a strange, hooked plastic device protruding from her mouth.

Max can only suppress his scream to the level of a desperate moan. He rolls out of bed and backs away, vaguely noticing that, once again, he has been sleeping fully clothed.

Max manages to control himself. Maybe she's not dead. Maybe it all makes sense, somehow.

MAX
(WHISPERING)
Masha. Masha!

Masha does not respond. Max approaches her gingerly, grasps the plastic device sticking out of her mouth and gives it a tug. About three feet of plastic tubing slides out of her mouth: it feels to Max that there must be miles more to come.

He lets the thing go, dropping it to the floor. An orangey-gray fluid oozes down the tube and out of the plastic hook onto the rug.

Max rips away the sheet and blanket which are covering Masha's corpse. She is nude, bound hand and foot, the style more like that of sexual bondage than serious restraint: leather straps, black, tubular rubber thongs, a studded collar around her neck with steel loops for chains.

Max is reeling. The room begins to twitch video. Max starts to have flashes of Nicki's Videodrome episode again, only this time with Masha playing the lead role. 4/2

Max shakes off the disturbing images. Gently, tenderly, almost fussily, he covers Masha with the blankets and sheets. Then Max starts to walk around the room, snapping his fingers nervously as though trying to wake himself up out of some hypnotic trance, himself playing the roles of both mesmerizer and victim.

The telephone rings. Max stops in his tracks, turns, looks at the phone. It's on the floor beside the bed. It has a short cord. It rings again.

Max answers it, hunkering on the floor, straining at the cord to stay as far away from the bed as possible. It's Nicki.

NICKI (OS)
Max?

MAX
Yes.
(PAUSE. KNOWING THE ANSWER ALREADY)
Who is this?

NICKI (OS)
(CASUALLY)
It's Nicki.

MAX
Fuck!

NICKI (OS)
I sent you a love letter. Did you get it?

MAX
Fucking bitch. You're supposed to be dead.

NICKI (OS)
I wouldn't die without letting you in on it. Didn't you know that?

MAX
I don't want anything to do with you, dead or alive.

NICKI (OS)
Come to us, Max. We're ready for you now.

MAX
No.

NICKI (OS)
Don't be petulant. Videodrome makes strange bedfellows.

MAX
(INCREDULOUS)
You killed her? You put her corpse in my bed?

NICKI (OS)
Come to us now and we'll take care of it. If you don't, the police will be there in two minutes. They'd love to get you, honey. A lot of people would. You're on the wrong side of the world. Come to us now.

MAX
(PAUSE)
How?

36. EXT. NIGHT. BROAD CITY STREET

Max walks alone along a large, deserted downtown street. He gradually becomes aware that an immense Lincoln stretch limousine is cruising along behind him. Max stops, lights a cigarette. The limo stops. Max resumes walking. He is carrying a creased canvas overnight bag under his arm.

The limo glides ahead of Max and stops about a hundred feet down the road, waiting. Max ambles up to the limo and gets in without hesitation, as though it were something he did at least twice a week.

37. INT. LIMO. NIGHT

Max can't really see the driver clearly through the glass partition separating the passenger compartment from the driver's. The driver's voice comes to him through a speaker in the rear. Max can see his murky silhouette, complete with chauffeur's cap, talking into a hand-held microphone. The front-to-rear sound-proofing is obviously very good. The driver's tone is of the "this-is-your-captain-speaking" variety.

DRIVER (OS)
Good evening, sir. We'll be on the road for about eight hours. You'll find blankets under the folding seats in front of you as well as some newspapers and magazines. Food, coffee, soft drinks are in the walnut-veneer cabinet. Welcome aboard.

MAX
You mean there's no television set?

The driver does not answer. Instead, the limo chirps its tires as it pulls away from the curb.

Max opens the walnut-veneer cabinet, checks out the papers, finds a New York times, and settles down as the limo slows for a stop light at an intersection near the highway.

Max is already deep in his paper when he hears a voice - a metallic but familiar voice - whispering to him over the rear speaker.

METALLIC VOICE (WHISPERING)
Max. Max. Don't do this alone. Be careful. Don't try to do this alone.

Max looks up at the driver's silhouette. It is immobile, both hands on the wheel waiting for the light to change.

Something makes Max glance out his side window. There, sitting on the sidewalk beside two newspaper boxes at the corner, is his television set, the Electrohome console. Or is it?

No, it is his Videodrome-brand console, swelling and contracting with its gigantic breaths, its fleshy surface - walnut-veneer? - rippling with musculature, shot through now with large veins, downy with soft surface hairs backlit by the mercury vapour street lights.

Max drops his paper and lowers his side window, crooks his neck out the window to see how good this hallucination really is, to see if it will stand up under closer scrutiny.

On the TV screen, pulsing and distorting slightly with each breath of the set, is the face of Brian O'Blivion. The face is looking right at Max, and its voice is now audible directly from the set's speaker only a few feet from the curb.

O'BLIVION (ON TV)
(WHISPERING)
Be cagey, Max. Be wary. Beware the optometrist. Beware the spectacular Nicki Brand...the spectacle of Nicki...

The light changes to green and the limo begins to accelerate through the intersection, leaving the TV set behind.

The Videodrome set sits breathing, rippling and quivering on the corner as Max's face, still hanging out the limo window, pale and vulnerable,recedes into the distance as the limo sweeps up the ramp leading to the highway.

38. INT. LIMO. DAWN

Max wakes up, finds that his blanket has slipped off a bit, pulls it back around him and looks out the window. The limo is just hitting the outskirts of a non-descript small city.

The dawn is a jarring, solarized orange.

Max is pouring the dregs of a thermos of coffee down his throat when he realizes that the limo is pulling to a halt. He checks out the terrain. It is a desolate mixture of dormant industrial and open countryside.

The car suddenly turns right and pulls into the parking lot of a small industrial park surrounded by fields on three sides. On its way in they pass a sign which says SPECTACULAR OPTOMETRY INTERNATIONAL. Max's blood runs cold. Hallucination or not, O'Blivion's warning just a few hours ago is too close to the words on the modest, plexiglass and concrete sign for comfort.

The limo parks at the end of a line of three black, middle-of-the-range Saabs in a spot marked RESERVED FOR BARRY CONVEX. The driver jumps out and opens the door for Max.

Max gets out of the car slowly, stretching, noticing that the driver is tall, lean, and totally straight in appearance. He even seems freshly shaven - could he have shaved in the car on the way in? The driver hands Max his overnight bag.

DRIVER
(FRIENDLY)
Here we are, sir. Hope you weren't too cramped back there.

MAX
I was fine. (WRYLY) I guess this isn't Pittsburgh.

DRIVER
No sir, it's not.
(SALUTES LIKE A PILOT IN AN AIRLINES COMMERCIAL)
Au revoir.

The driver gets into the limo again and pulls away as Max turns to see Nicki Brand coming towards him down a hallway full of glass doors. She opens the outside door and beckons him inside. Max hesitates, then enters. ✓ this way —

39. INT. DAWN. SPECTACULAR OP HALLWAY

Nicki kisses Max on the cheek as though they'd been married twenty years, did this every morning. She is dressed conservatively, functionally, but with a twist of something that suggests rationality taken to the degree of perversion. In fact, she is dressed like a black Saab automobile.

NICKI
(ECSTATIC)
Oh, God, Max! I'm so excited to see you.
Take my hand.

Max looks down at the offered hand. A bracelet slides down onto her wrist from under her sleeve. A bracelet Max recognizes. Before he knows it, he is holding her hand tightly, even desperately. It surprises him.

They walk down the hallway together like two kids going to a prom. Max sees no security, nothing out of the ordinary.

MAX
Is this Videodrome Central?

NICKI
The studio is here...an electronics workshop... executive offices. The rest is for making glasses.

MAX
Maybe I should pick up a pair. Been seeing some strange things lately.

NICKI
(LAUGHS)
How does it feel? What are they like...the hallucinations? Are they weird and incredible and sick and wonderful?

Max stops, lets go of Nicki's hand.

MAX
You know what's been happening to me?

NICKI
Max...that's been the whole point. That's what Videodrome really is: a giant hallucination machine. You watch it and you get stoned. When it's ready for the marketplace, the world will never be the same again.

ugh!

god - who'll be quicker

Max slips his hands into his pockets and starts to walk again. Nicki goes with him.

MAX
(THOUGHTFULLY)
I have a big TV set that follows me around like a dog and tells me things. Talks about you a lot. He told me not to trust you. Should I believe him?

NICKI
(WIDE-EYED, EXCITED)
I'd only listen to him if he's an established brand name.

She stops in front of a door. Max stops a few paces later.

NICKI
Here's your dressing room. Can I come in and watch you shave?
(PAUSE)
You can say no.

40. INT. MORNING. DRESSING ROOM

Max is shaving with his safety razor, a few toilet articles spread out around his shaving bag. The blade is blunt and Max is having trouble.

Nicki sits on the edge of the bathtub idly squirting Vitabath into the water pouring from the faucet into the tub.

NICKI
It was an accident that you stumbled on Videodrome while they were making some preliminary transmission tests. They sent me out to persuade you to forget what you saw. They worry about industrial espionage.

MAX
They picked your name out of the phone book.

NICKI
I'd been with them a long time, almost since the beginning. I arranged your invitation to be on the panel show with me. And then when I met you, I realized you could be one of us. I wanted you to be one of us. You're so good at what you do.

MAX
I guess you didn't want Masha Borowczyk. Have you personally killed a lot of people?

NICKI
C'mon, Max...we've never killed anyone. Masha is not dead. That's Videodrome working. That's a hallucination that's all your own. You killed her - in your sexy, paranoid little imagination.

MAX
You knew what I was talking about when I told you there was a corpse in my bed.

NICKI
(LAUGHS)
I sure did. I've ended up with a few corpses in bed myself. Other than that, I was just playing it by ear. I said we'd take care of it, and we will - by proving to you that it wasn't real.

MAX
Yeah? Nobody has died on Videodrome?

NICKI
They're all like me - third-rate actors. A death scene is the easiest thing to do.

MAX
Why not a talk show? Safer, cheaper, no special effects...

NICKI
Something to do with the effects of exposure to violence on the nervous system. Receptors open up in the brain and the spine and allow the Videodrome signal to sink in.

MAX
Then why not football? That's violent.

NICKI
But socially acceptable. And not very sexy. It's the thrill of forbidden fruit that gets those little synapses to spread their legs.

MAX
My TV set friend tells me that those little synapses turn cancerous under the influence of Videodrome.

NICKI
Your imaginary friend sounds to me like a hallucinatory self-projection of your unconscious. An unusual manifestation of alter ego. It's really just you, Max, telling yourself what you're afraid of.

MAX
It's very convincing. Shows up in the strangest places.

NICKI
I love it! Oh, God, I can hardly wait to try it.

Max puts down his razor and carefully levels his gaze at Nicki. His expression is corrosive. Nicki turns away, turns off the faucet.

MAX
Why haven't you tried it, Nicki? Why so generous? Why let me go first? It's not like you.

NICKI
I told you. It was an accident that you...

MAX
No, no...after that. When you knew my mind was being rotted away by that stuff and you didn't say anything. You got me to watch more. Much more. You got me to watch you.

NICKI
I'm not a very stable person, lover. It excited me to see you get sucked in so far you couldn't get out. I told them it happened before I could get to you. That's why you're here. They want to see if it's reversible; they want to help you. But I personally don't give a fuck, because I find you more exciting this way. In fact, you're giving me a contact high right now.

Nicki gets up and moves close to Max, runs her hands over his body, bites his lip. Max suddenly grabs her by the hair and slaps her across the face hard with his free hand, once, twice. Nicki moans.

NICKI
(MOANING)
Max...oh, Max...

Max embraces her ferociously. He bites at her left earring until her ear begins to bleed. The blood streaks into Max's shaving cream which has smeared over Nicki's face and into her hair. They begin to flash video, their images stretching and distorting with each caress.

41. INT. MORNING. LATER. DRESSING ROOM

At the sink, Max splashes off the few blotches of blood-streaked lather that are left on his face. As he studies his dripping face in the mirror, the mirror becomes a TV screen for a few seconds, his image in it going static-flecked video.

4/2

Behind him in the TV screen-mirror, Max seems to see the Videodrome set with some vaguely nasty things going on amongst a group of shadowy figures. Max whirls around. The room is back to normal.

Max mops his face with a towel, then moves over to the tub, which is full. The foam has gone a bit flat. Max dips his hand in the water. Tepid. He decides to forget the bath and reaches into the water to pull the plug.

Max's eyes suddenly go wide with fear, as though he has felt something alive in the tub. He pulls his hand out of the water and slams back against the sink. A metallic bubbling sound fills the room, echoes off the tiles.

As Max watches, disbelieving, the TV set rises up out of the water, out of the green Badedas foam like an electronic Venus on the half-shell. The set is swelling, breathing and snorkling as befits a marine creature of its substantial size. Masha's face is on the screen, an anguished expression wracking her features, the studded collar around her neck. Crackling green foam drips down the stretching, distorting sc

Max backs away a step or two. There is too much pain on Masha's face, the spectacle is too grotesque.

MASHA (ON TV)
They killed me, Maxie. They killed me. I wasn't supposed to tell you about Brian O'Blivion.

MAX
Fuck off, will you? Just fuck off! You're a hallucinatory self-projection. You're nothing!

MASHA (ON TV)
I didn't lie to you, Maxie. Videodrome is death.

MAX
(SCREAMING)
Shut up!

MASHA (ON TV)
Videodrome is death. I didn't lie to you. They killed me. They killed me...

Max falls to his knees in front of the tub and starts battering the TV set with his fists. His fists sink deep within the flesh of the set with each blow - into the screen, the speaker, the cabinetry itself. And with each blow Masha screams in pain as though she herself were being beaten.

Finally Max collapses, sobbing wretchedly, his arms around the set, holding it tight, holding it desperately as though he were adrift at sea, Ishmael clinging to the floating coffin.

On the screen, Masha is no longer screaming. She is comforting, motherly, concerned.

MASHA (ON TV)
That's better. So much better. It'll be all right, Maxie. It'll be all right. Max...listen to me. Look at me. LOOK AT ME.

Max lets go of the set and sits back on the floor. Masha is now radiant, beatific, no longer bruised and disheveled, no longer wearing a collar. She seems to be floating against a black background, angelic, benign.

MASHA (ON TV)
You're living in a new world now, Max. Things are different here. And in this new world, you must listen to me. I'm the video word made flesh, Maxie.

The image of Masha dissolves into the image of Brian O'Blivion, same background, same beatific tone.

O'BLIVION (ON TV)
I'm the video word made flesh.

And now in its turn the image of O'Blivion dissolves into the image of Bianca O'Blivion, same background, same beatific tone.

BIANCA (ON TV)
I'm the video word made flesh.

Max stares at the screen, transfixed. Tears stream down his cheeks.

MAX
(TRANCE-LIKE)
I'm the video word made flesh.

The camera tilts down from Max's face to his bare abdomen. The puckered, livid, pulsing vertical slit is back again. As the camera tracks in on the slit, it opens tremulously and swallows the camera into darkness.

42. INT. MORNING. SPECTACULAR OP WHOLESALE SHOWROOM

Out of the darkness Nicki's face fades up looking soft, happy, excited. She puts on a pair of glasses with baroque frames and straight glass rather than lenses in them - demo frames. She looks over to Max, who puts on a pair of his own, equally ornate. Max seems calm, deliberate, open.

Max and Nicki are moving around the demonstration counter which is set up in the Wholesale Showroom of Spectacular Optical. Its surface is basically a light box covered with frames in translucent plastic holders - a salad bar for glasses.

On the walls of the showroom are banners and posters bearing the latest generation of Spect Op graphics and ad slogans. One of them, a guy-girl-car-chic sunglasses effort, reads: LOVE COMES IN AT THE EYE -W.B.Yeats. SPECTACULAR OPTICAL HELPS. Another, which features stained-glass church windows, declares: THE EYE IS THE WINDOW OF THE SOUL. SOULFUL STYLING BY SPECTACULAR OPTICAL. The general style of the place is conservative mid-American posh.

NICKI
If love comes in at the eye, what happens when you wear prescription lenses?

MAX
You get optically corrected love coming in at the eye.

Max and Nicki circle the counter, modelling frames for each other.

NICKI
How was your bath?

MAX
The tub got too crowded. There was no room for me. I took a shower.

NICKI
I look forward to meeting your friends.

MAX
I have a feeling you will.

NICKI
(SUDDENLY SERIOUS)
That's all Videodrome means to me, Max. No matter what anyone else tells you. It's a way to get from where I am to where you are now.

Max is about to answer when a voice interrupts them.

CONVEX
I hope you two realize you're playing with dynamite.

Max and Nicki turn to the doorway, each wearing an especially absurd pair of glasses. At the door stands Barry Convex, tall, lanky, smiling broadly. He has the look and tone of an insurance salesman. He does not wear glasses.

CONVEX
(BROAD SMILE)
That's our spring line. Top secret stuff. Max Renn - meet Barry Convex.

Convex takes a few confident, power-of-positive-thinking strides over to the demo counter and extends his hand to Max. They shake.

CONVEX
(TO MAX)
I think that machinery you're wearing is too much for your shape of face. Overwhelms you. Try something more spidery, more delicate.
(TO NICKI, KISSING HER ON THE CHEEK)
You got him here, darlin'. Thanks.

When Convex turns back to Max, he finds him wearing another pair of glasses - fairly effeminate wire rims. They sit crookedly on his nose.

MAX
How 'bout these? Spidery?

Convex smiles. He reaches out to Max's face and adjusts the glasses so they sit properly. It is a strangely intimate act. Convex steps back to check out his handiwork.

CONVEX
You look lousy in glasses.

43. INT. MORNING. MILITARY/INDUSTRIAL SHOWROOM

Convex leads Max and Nicki through another, much larger showroom. Although the self-congratulatory, think-positive style is the same, this showroom's displays of military and industrial optical equipment immediately suggest another, heavier side to Spectacular Optical: KEEPING AN EYE ON THE WORLD reads one illuminated panel depicting a fighter plane in flight carrying a spherical belly pod, obviously some kind of surveillance module; OPENING THE EYES OF MAN TO NEW WORLDS reads another which shows a huge factory

floor in Taiwan where six hundred woman, each with her eyes glued to an industrial microscope, attach macro-components to anonymous circuit boards.

The place is set up like a kids' science museum, with operating displays and cutaways, scale models in glass cases, and pre-recorded lectures available over headphones at the push of a button. Right now, Convex is giving a small lecture of his own.

CONVEX
I started off grinding lenses for pocket magnifying glasses in school. Got into glasses, then microscopes, then - sky's the limit. We were doing some very, very sophisticated zero light weapons' scopes for military application.. used a system of vidicon tubes - a closed circuit of little TV tubes where we amplified indistinct signals from tube to tube to tube - to create images where the physics books said there wasn't enough light for an image to exist. We made a kinda helmet with conical fibre-optics image accumulators - didn't want to get into lasers - and the damndest thing happened to the boys who were testin' her.

(C) ? (P) ? DIDN'T THINK SO, BUT...

PHOTOMULTIPLIER TUBES?

MAX
They all got brain cancer. Came in at the eye.

Convex stops in his tracks. He can't believe that Max has said what he's said. He turns away like a rejected lover. Max just watches.

CONVEX
(REALLY UPSET)
Now that's a hell of a thing to say. Helluva damned negative thing.

Nicki walks over to Convex and puts a comforting hand on his arm.

NICKI
Max has had a pretty rough ride, Barry.

Convex takes a beat, then smiles. A smooth, professional recovery.

CONVEX
Yeah. Sure he has.

Convex turns back to Max and leads him over to a plastic display case.

CONVEX
Max...I'm a pretty straightforward kinda guy. And I suddenly find myself dealing with things - you know - freaky things.

Convex stops in front of the display case. In it, supported by a smooth stainless steel stand like a priceless museum piece, sits a bizarrely beautiful helmet which looks like a modern techno-interpretation of a mediaeval crown - something that would fit right in to Brian O'Blivion's office decor.

argh!

Convex uses a disc-like key to unlock the case and picks up the helmet. He flicks a lever at the side of the helmet and two points of the crown swivel down to form the new conical fibre-optics eyes of the wearer.

CONVEX
This is our little sweetheart - the prototype. The only one in existence right now.

Max is wary. As Convex rotates the helmet in his hands, it seems to be watching him somehow, taking everything in.

CONVEX
We got pretty deep into our campaign for her. Gotta sell the hell out of it no matter how good it is. And the name - military boys are suckers for a snappy name. Sales came up with Accumicon. Accumicon - for image accumulator.

MAX
(FASCINATED BY THE HELMET)
I'd buy Accumicon. Yeah. I'd buy that.

CONVEX
She worked like a charm in the lab - light, comfortable, extension of the body. Turned a man into a zero light fighting machine. But then, under simulated combat conditions - the boys who used her began to hallucinate. Images began to appear that really weren't there...and it lasted for hours after they stopped wearing her. Took us quite a while to figure out

CONVEX (CONT'D)
that the boys were starting to project their own images through the optical accumilator - images that came directly from their brains and ended up exciting the vidicon mosaic like an electron gun. Video hallucinations, Max...that we have recorded on tape.

Convex walks over to a monitor/cassette unit and plugs in one of several cassettes held in a rack. The first image is a beautifully soft-lit shot of the Accumicon helmet rotating in mid-air - a TV commercial product shot. The word Accumicon types itself out in computer-legible type across the screen, then begins to glow with an aura that fades the screen to white.

A straight cut then takes us into a shot which apparently represents Accumicon's POV during an anonymous researcher's hallucinatory episode in an outdoor combat-simulation zone.

Vague, shimmering shapes seem to swim in and out of view as the wearer of the helmet dodges explosions and climbs a rope ladder over a wooden barrier.

At erratic intervals a marked grid bordered by LED scales - something more elaborate than what you see in the viewfinder of an expensive automatic camera - snaps over the general field of vision, then snaps out again.

CONVEX
We took our feed from the Accumicon's left eyepiece - that grid is our boy in the field trying to adjust out his hallucinations. See anything that looks familiar?

MAX
No. Not even close.

NICKI
(TO MAX)
This is about where I got involved with the project, Max. They felt they needed a professional psychological interpretation of these hallucinatory graphics.

MAX
Yeah? This guy's a repressed homosexual. Anybody could tell you that.

Convex snorts and turns off the tape deck.

CONVEX
I take it you're not impressed with the creative quality of our boy's little flight into the fantastic.

MAX
You asking me to say my hallucinations are better than his?

CONVEX
Max - we've just seen somebody's mental images on tape - done not the way it's always been done before, but directly. If it could be controlled, you could create a video narrative directly from your brain. Thousands of characters, exotic locales, amazing special effects - all for free. Why hire a thousand people just to fill a frame this big? Just think them onto it.

"BRAINSTORM"?

NICKI
The artists of the future would be those individuals who could focus their Videodrome hallucinations, shape them, control them... I'm talking about you, Max. I think you're the first.

"DREAMING IS A PRIVATE THING"?

Max stands speechless for a few beats, then starts to laugh.

MAX
You know what? I think that you two are my greatest works. It's obvious to me that I'm just imagining you.

Convex approaches Max with the Accumicon under his arm. After a self-consciously dramatic pause, he holds out the helmet to Max as though about to crown a king.

CONVEX
Then why not immortalize us on tape? We'd look good in a frothy sitcom, don't you think?

Max looks at the helmet. It still seems to be watching him.

44. INT. DAY. VIDEODROME STUDIO

CU Max as the Accumicon helmet is lowered over his head. A looser shot shows us Max sitting in the middle of the Videodrome set, not nearly as sinister in the context of the small, well-lit Spectacular Op TV studio as it has been on the TV screen.

Three video cameras on hydraulic pedestals and four rows of folding chairs are the only witnesses as Convex adjusts the helmet on Max's head.

MAX
I've never worn this thing before. How does it relate to what's been happening to me?

CONVEX
We were trying to see if we could externalize the Accumicon closed circuit - use a standard TV set to function as the helmet's viewer. We started to transmit to our own receivers, your pirate picked us up...

Convex flips down the Accumicon visor and stands back. The visor does not cover Max's mouth.

CONVEX
I was wrong. You do look good in glasses.

Max's POV is now very much like what we have seen on the Accumicon demo tape except that it is almost unbearably bright and washed out.

MAX
I can't keep my eyes open. It's too bright.

CONVEX
Christ, yes.

Convex sprints to the lighting control panel just off set and hauls down several levers. The studio is immediately plunged into darkness.

45. INT. DARKNESS. ACCUMICON POV. VIDEODROME SET

Although there is no longer any light on the set, there is an image in the Accumicon's viewer - a TV image whose colours pulse and fluoresce. Suddenly, it's as though Max were watching an episode of Videodrome.

Max stands up, looks around the set. A harsh slice of light reveals Convex standing in the studio doorway - he has opened the door a few inches so that he can see. He approaches Max with something in his hand, something that Max can't quite see because of the back-light blooming and pulsing in his viewer.

CONVEX (IN VIEWER)
Take this, Max. It'll help open the neural floodgates.

Max takes what is handed to him, but he still can't quite see what it is.

Convex turns and walks to the door. He pauses in the stabbingly bright doorway.

CONVEX (IN VIEWER)
You'll have to forgive me if I don't stay to watch. I'm real squeamish.

Convex closes the door. The Accumicon viewer stabilizes. Max looks down at his hand and sees that he is holding a heavy multi-tailed lash in his hand. From somewhere behind him comes Nicki's voice.

NICKI (OS)
Well, here we are at last - right where we ought to be.

Max turns towards the voice and sees - his TV set, rotating slowly on a pedestal that looks suspiciously like the one in Accumicon's display case.

Max takes a few steps towards the TV set which, as usual, is visibly breathing. As the screen rotates towards Max, he sees that Nicki is on it, stripped to the waist, her hands raised above her head as though they were tied together and looped over a hook above her. Her back is towards Max.

Nicki looks coyly over her shoulder at Max.

NICKI (ON TV)
What are you waiting for, lover? Let's perform. Let's open those neural floodgates.

Nicki turns her face away, waiting.

46. INT. VIDEODROME STUDIO

We are no longer watching from Max's POV, but the strange colour quality remains the same.

Max lets the tails of the lash trail on the floor as he begins to circle the TV set as it rotates, keeping the screen bearing Nicki's image in front of him. Max lashes out at the TV set, a tentative blow. Nicki's image flinches slightly as though she has been hit.

Excited by this response, Max begins to lash out again, then again, his blows becoming stronger, more vicious with each atroke.

Soon he is getting a response not only from Nicki's image, but from the TV set itself: it shudders, quivers, and flinches under the lash; blood and white fluids begin to ooze from the long wounds in its cabinet left by the tails of the lash.

Max stops circling with the set and stands in one spot, legs spread for better leverage, lashing madly away as the set rotates towards us. As the screen reveals itself to us we see, not Nicki, but Masha in video CU, tears running down her face, her image distorting horribly with each stroke of the lash.

47. INT. MAX/ACCUMICON POV. VIDEODROME SET

We see Max lashing at the TV set from his video POV inside the Accumicon helmet. Each time the lash hits the set there is a video twitch in the viewer which becomes more and more pronounced until it smears into video darkness.

48. INT. DAWN. MAX'S LIVING ROOM

DISSOLVE UP out of the darkness into a CU Max.

Max is restlessly asleep on his sofa in his own living room. He is dressed, rumpled and unshaven. An insistent knock at the door begins to pound into his head until he jolts awake, eyes wild. He jumps up before he really knows where he is and staggers a few steps, then closes his eyes against the searing pain that rips through his head.

The knocking at the door continues relentlessly. Max manages to open his eyes enough to stumble to the door. He opens it a crack, notices that the chain latch is not fastened. Bridey is standing in the hallway looking very concerned. For a few brief seconds, Bridey twitches into video.

Max shakes it off and it stays off.

BRIDEY
Max? God. Do you recognize me? Are you all right?

Max opens the door.

MAX
(GROGGILY)
C'mon in.

Bridey steps inside and Max closes the door, automatically chain-locking the door before he turns to face Bridey. Bridey clutches her canvas Danish schoolbag defensively and doesn't sit down.

Max takes a few beats to read the apprehension in her eyes.

MAX
I look that bad, do I?

BRIDEY
You've been gone for days, Max.

Max ambles into the kitchen and picks the kettle up from the stove. He shakes it. There seems to be some water inside. He turns on an element and puts the kettle on it.

MAX
I haven't been gone for days. Just seems like it. Want coffee?

Max starts to grind some beans. Bridey follows him into the kitchen, still hesitant about getting too close to him.

BRIDEY
You have, Max. Three days. What have you been doing in here? Smells terrible.

MAX
I sweat a lot when I work.

Max takes a few surreptitious sniffs. Bridey is right. Something is wrong in the apartment. Max abandons the grinder and starts to guide Bridey to the door. Could Masha's corpse still be lying in his bed?

MAX
Maybe you'd better let me get cleaned up.

Bridey backs away from Max just enough to avoid his touch.

BRIDEY
You said you were going to get help. Have you seen a psychiatrist?

MAX
As a matter of fact, I have.

BRIDEY
You're lying to me, Max.

MAX
I'm not, I swear I'm not. I talked to a shrink yesterday. A lady shrink.

BRIDEY
Then I think you'd better come into the office today and talk to Moses about it. Something's going on. There's trouble in the works.

MAX
Aha. Comes the revolution.

BRIDEY
You've got it. It's serious. The board just made Harlan Vice-President in charge of Programming. They didn't wait for you.

MAX
(INCREDULOUS)
Harlan? You mean Harlan the cable pirate?

BRIDEY
It's very weird, Max. Harlan won't talk to me about it.

MAX
I didn't think he was interested.

BRIDEY
He's more than interested. It's as though we never knew who he really was.

Bridey pauses as their eyes meet. She doesn't know who Max is either.

BRIDEY
Moses and Kate have been talking about a new approach for Civic. Family stuff. Housewives. Sounds like the fifties, whatever they were.

MAX
And they want Harlan to structure that?

BRIDEY
He's convinced them that he can. Are you gonna come back and turn it around again? 'Cause I'm going to quit if you don't.

MAX
I don't have to come back, Bridey. I never left. I invented Civic TV.
(TAPS HIS TEMPLES)
It came right outa here.

Bridey takes a beat, then unhooks the latch and puts her hand on the doorknob.

BRIDEY
Nobody sent me to get you, Maxie. They've kinda written you off, you know? I keep hearing them talk about "legally incompetent" and drugs and brain damage...

MAX
Who? Who was talking...?

Bridey bursts into tears.

BRIDEY
Oh, Maxie... Max...

Max reaches out to wipe her tears away but Bridey pulls open the door and runs out, almost stumbling as she goes.

MAX
Bridey...wait!

Max makes a move to go after her, then thinks better of it. He closes the door thoughtfully, absent-mindedly chainlocking the door again.

Max goes into the kitchen and takes the kettle off the element. His nostrils flare as he breathes in deeply. Yes - something does smell terrible.

Max pauses at his bedroom door, which is partially closed. He pushes it open with his foot. There is a still, lifeless form on his bed under the covers.

49. INT. DAWN. MAX'S BEDROOM

Max approaches the bed and rips the covers away.

In his bed lies his TV set, soaking in a pool of blood and anonymous fluids, slashed open across the screen which hangs in tatters like a torn lung, very animal-like guts hanging out of its cabinet as though it had been disembowelled. And worst of all are the still oozing wounds from Max's lash, some so deep they've almost severed off chunks of the cabinet's strange flesh.

The stench of rotting corpse is overwhelming. Max backs away in horror, turns, leaves the room, slams the door shut.

50. INT. DAWN. MAX'S LIVING ROOM

Max leans against the wall opposite the bedroom door, sweating, breathing deeply, fighting for control.

MAX
(TO HIMSELF)
Listen. Listen - the thing is....what does it mean? It's all in the meaning. That's what's important. What does it mean?
(PAUSE)
OK. OK.

Max peels himself off the wall and strolls - a little too nonchalantly - into the centre of the livingroom. He stops and checks out the room. Sure enough, there is a large, ostentatious space opposite the sofa where the TV set used to be.

MAX
(TO HIMSELF)
No...no, it's not the fact. It's the meaning. It's... it's just me...telling myself...

Max goes over to the space left by the absent TV set - a space that is in its own way now the most tangible thing in the room. He gets down on his knees to examine the piece of broadloom that the TV set used to sit on. There are indentations in the broadloom marking out the perimeter of the TV console.

Max stands up again.

MAX
(TO HIMSELF)
A dead TV set in your bed means...
no, a dead TV set in your bed where there used to be the dead body of a woman...

Max fumbles in his pocket for cigarettes, finds nothing, goes to the drawer of an end table, finds a pack, lights a cigarette, returns to the centre of the livingroom. He nods to himself.

MAX
(TO HIMSELF)
Yeah. Yeah. Right.

Max takes a deep drag. He notices something bright and colourful out of the corner of his eye - a small rain of phosphorescing multi-coloured particles on his shoulder. Video dandruff.

Max brushes at it, scattering cigarette ashes as he does so.

51. EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF CIVIC TV BUILDING. MORNING

Max keeps brushing at his bright video dandruff, then looks up, takes another drag. He is standing across the street from Civic TV, quietly watching the building which, like the street itself, is humming with morning action. Max unconsciously scratches his head.

Another flurry of video dandruff needles Max into checking himself out in the storefront window behind him. When he looks at his reflection, he is shocked to see that he is wearing the Accumicon helmet.

Max turns back to look across the street. From his POV, he is looking through the gridded Accumicon visor. The brightness is almost too much to bear.

Max squints and puts his hand to his eyes. He feels nothing, no visor, no helmet. When he opens his eyes, everything seems normal again. He looks in the window. No helmet - normal.

Max takes a last drag on his cigarette, throws it down, steps on it with great deliberation, and then crosses the street.

52. INT. MORNING. CIVIC TV BUILDING

Max makes his way through the Civic TV rabbit warren. He nods and kids with office boys and messengers as though it were just another working day. The response he gets from underlings is normal; the response he gets from executives and those in the know varies from wariness to fear to astonishment.

Max seems to glide through it all without noticing, but of course he does.

When Bridey notices Max approaching her desk, she brightens right out of the distracted funk she has been in.

BRIDEY
(BEAMING)
Max. Wow.

MAX
Let's start with Harlan.

BRIDEY
He's in Tina's old office. They put Tina in the basement for now. There aren't any windows down there and she's kinda claustrophobic...

MAX
OK.

Max goes off down the hall.

53. INT. MORNING. CIVIC TV. HARLAN'S NEW OFFICE

Max opens the door to an office which has a card reading TINA HIRSCH taped to the door.

Inside the office, Harlan is just in the process of re-wiring a very makeshift-looking intercom on his desk. He looks up, smiles, but doesn't stop fooling around with the assortment of small tools on the desk-top. Max comes in and closes the door behind him.

MAX
(PAUSE)
So...pirate turns president.

HARLAN
(AMIABLY)
It's what all pirates really want.

MAX
I'm told the board is unhappy with my recent...adventures. I get the feeling you've encouraged them to be unhappy.

HARLAN
Not me, Max. It was just inevitable. They don't understand you. Not the way I do.

MAX
Not hip like you, huh? You think a few Valium and a little group therapy'd fix me right up.

Harlan puts down his pliers, takes a beat and then slides open a drawer. He searches around in the drawer for something.

HARLAN
No, I don't, Max. I don't think you need fixing at all.

Harlan finds what he's looking for and puts it on the desk. It's a videocassette. Harlan looks Max in the eye.

HARLAN
I think you're in good shape.

A feeling of dread takes hold of Max. He tries to shake it off.

MAX
(INDICATING CASSETTE)
What's that? A celebrity cooking show for the new season?

HARLAN
No. It's my favourite episode of Videodrome. The one that stars Max Renn.

Max looks at the cassette as it lies on Harlan's desk. Is it breathing? Max looks away. He doesn't want it to be breathing.

MAX
That show was transmitted? You brought it in on the dish?

HARLAN
Not exactly. After all, I wouldn't have recognized you in that kinky outfit you were wearing, now would I?

MAX
It wasn't an accident that we pulled in Videodrome. You made it happen. They sent you to me. You've been with them all along.

Harlan picks up the cassette and moves around from behind the desk towards Max. The cassette definitely contracts when Harlan touches it. Max flattens against the wall, paralysed.

HARLAN
We didn't even pull it in, Max. It was playing through an Accumicon playback module we installed in the furnace room next to the lab. It's too dangerous to transmit. Much too dangerous...for now.

MAX
But why? Why go through all that?

HARLAN
We needed a guinea pig. Somebody who would respond to Videodrome. And we want Channel 83. It's small, but it's a start.

Harlan is very close, now. Very close. He hefts the weight of the cassette in his hand. It stretches and pulses impatiently. Max can hardly breathe.

MAX
What do you...what do you want from me?

Harlan starts to unbutton Max's shirt. Max is frozen against the wall, splayed out as though riding a centrifuge spinning at top velocity. His hair seems to be blowing back. Video dandruff seems to be raining down on both shoulders.

HARLAN
I want you to open up, Max. Open up to me.

Harlan pulls Max's shirt open. The slit is there, pulsing impatiently.

HARLAN
I've got something I want to play for you.

MAX
(A CHOKED WHISPER)
No!

Harlan rams the cassette into the slit in Max's abdomen. His hand goes in up to the wrist.

54. INT. MORNING. CIVIC TV BUILDING. BRIDEY'S DESK

Bridey is slitting open some mail when she becomes aware that Max is standing next to her. Max looks twitchy, distracted.

BRIDEY
How was it, Max? It's spooky, isn't it?
(PAUSE. MAX DOESN'T RESPOND)
How different he is. Harlan...

MAX
Where's Moses?

BRIDEY
He's in a meeting with Rafe. I'll tell him you're here.

MAX
Don't. Board room?

Bridey nods.

55. INT. MORNING. CIVIC TV. BOARD ROOM

Moses and Raphael are sitting alone at the board room table with their backs to the door and the camera. They are watching a celebrity cooking show on the board room monitor. 4/2

MOSES
(TO RAPHAEL)
That's fine. I'm not disputing family at 2 PM. What I am disputing is boring, and to me, watching two faggots cook is boring. I mean, what about the kids? They're not gonna watch this crap. And if the kids won't watch, they won't let their mothers watch it either 'cause... they're gonna be driving their mothers bananas...What?

Raphael is the first to become aware that someone is in the room with them. He turns to see who it is, then Moses does too.

RAPHAEL
(GENTLY. TO CAMERA) Hi, Maxie.

When we cut to Max standing by the door, we see that he is wearing the Accumicon helmet. From Max's POV, Raphael and Moses appear in video. Max flips the Accumicon grid down over the frame.

MOSES (IN ACCUMICON VIEWER)
(TO RAPHAEL)
I think I'd better talk to Max alone, Rafe..

Raphael swivels his chair around to face Max. From the POV of Raphael and Max, Max is not wearing a helmet of any kind, although he holds himself as though he were.

RAPHAEL
Max and me go back a long way, don't we Max? There's nothing we can't say to each other. We get to a point where we have a problem, we can talk about it...

Max does not seem to be listening. He pulls open his shirt. The slit in his belly is there, pulsing and livid, excited. Max jams his hand into the slit, into his stomach, and withdraws it. The slit drools a thread of blood. In Max's hand is a bizarre little hand gun that fits around his fist like a glove so that you can barely tell hand from gun. The metal of the gun has flesh-coloured streaks running through it and what seem to be minute veins and arteries, yet it is separate from Max's own flesh.

Raphael recoils in fear.

RAPHAEL
(AFRAID)
Oh, God, Max. Don't...

MOSES
(DISBELIEVING)
What the fuck...?

Max fires the weapon. The sound is strange, more like an underwater spear gun than a pistol. Moses is hit first, but not by bullets: Max's handgun seems to fire little gobbets of flesh which stick to Moses' face and throat, then immediately begin to grow until Moses' face dissolves into an amorphous mass of veiny flesh within the space of a few seconds - like a cancerous growth seen to emerge in time lapse photography.

Raphael's eyes open wide as Moses falls crashing to the floor, taking several glasses and ashtrays with him. From Max's POV it is all seen through the gridded Accumicon video viewer.

From Raphael's POV we get a flash of Max holding a gun - the Walther PPK - that is a very real and ordinary gun. Max's shirt is open but, for Raphael, there is no abdominal slit. Max opens fire. Raphael dies as seen through the Accumicon viewer, and he dies as Moses did - from a mass of suffocating tumours which spring from the handgun's fleshy projectiles.

Raphael slumps in his conference chair. Max, suddenly helmet-less, approaches his body with the strange, fleshy gun still wrapped around his hand. Max leans over Raphael and prods the shapeless mass that was Raphael's face with his gun. The mass is soft.

The sound of running feet and yelling in the corridor outside the board room prompt Max to pull the gun away from Raphael's corpse, but the gun won't detach: the tip of its barrel has fused to the flesh of the corpse's face.

As the door of the board room bursts open, Max yanks the gun free pulling the corpse forward over the arm of the chair. Blood oozes from the raw wound at the tip of the gun.

Max sticks the gun under his jacket, holding it there as though he himself has been wounded. He stands up to see Bridey and several others crowding into the doorway, apprehension and disbelief written on all their faces. Max takes a few halting steps towards them, his hand still hidden under his jacket.

Bridey rushes forward and takes Max under the arm to support him.

BRIDEY
Max... you're hurt! What happened?
What happened?

MAX
They...they killed us. They killed us.

Somebody screams. Two men rush into the room and start examining what's left of Moses and Raphael. Someone else gets on the phone and starts hollering for the police. Bridey helps Max walk unsteadily out of the board room.

Raphael's body is eased back into its chair. We see what everyone else in the room sees: not a mass of tumours, but a man who has been shot in the face. adorable —

56. INT. MORNING. CIVIC TV. CORRIDORS

The corridors immediately outside the board room are chaotic as everyone within earshot crowds around to find out what has happened.

Bridey, surprisingly cool and forceful, forces her way through the mob with Max in tow. Questions bounce off them like blows from a gauntlet.

BRIDEY
Give us a chance, will ya? C'mon.
Give us some air to breathe.

CROWD
What happened? What's going on? Did I hear gunshots? Was somebody hurt? Is that Max? Etc.

Bridey manages to hustle Max through a door which leads to a stairwell.

57. INT. MORNING. CIVIC TV. STAIRWELL

Bridey and Max tumble through the stairwell door. Bridey leans against it to keep everybody out. Max sits heavily on the top step, his hand still in his jacket.

BRIDEY
(FIGHTING FOR CONTROL)
Maxie? What's going on?

Max looks up at Bridey, his eyes bloodshot and teary. He slowly withdraws his hand from his jacket and points the bizarre fleshy handgun at her. Bridey stiffens, terror-stricken.

MAX
(CHOKED)
Bridey...what's this? What am I pointing at you?

BRIDEY
(TERRIFIED)
A gun, Max. Don't you know that?

MAX
Just a gun? An ordinary gun?

BRIDEY
Yeah. Ordinary.

Max looks down at the gun. It is not ordinary. He flicks his eyes back up to Bridey.

MAX
I can't let go of it. It's fused to my flesh. It's stuck.

BRIDEY
(ALMOST BREATHLESS)
You killed them, Max? Moses and Rafe?

MAX
They'll be back.
(NODS TO HIMSELF)
Yeah. They'll be back.
(QUICK SMILE)
See ya.

Max suddenly gets up and charges down the stairs, his gun arm flopping around like a dead arm, a prosthetic limb, as he goes.

Bridey keeps pressed up against the door, her eyes wide, paralysed, as shadows begin to gather around the fluted glass window of the stairwell door behind her.

58. EXT. MORNING. WATERFRONT STREETS AND ALLEYWAYS

Max flees quietly through a series of increasingly deserted and desolate waterfront streets and alleyways. He keeps his gun hand in his right coat pocket.

59. EXT. MORNING. CONDEMNED DOCK

Max finds himself wandering along the walkway bordering an old, rotting dock which harbours a motley selection of boats and unidentifiable floating machines condemned by the harbour police.

Finding himself completely alone in the autumn chill of the waterfront, he selects the largest of the vessels - a small commercial boat listing at an alarming angle - and clambers awkwardly aboard. A wooden sign nailed brutally to its side declares THIS VESSEL CONDEMNED BY HARBOUR POLICE. There is more print below the primary declaration but Max does not bother to read it.

60. INT. MORNING. CONDEMNED BOAT

As Max makes his way deep into the boat's hold, he realizes that he is not the first to take refuge there. The remains of three or four derelicts' nests composed of bottles, newspapers, cans and decomposing shirts and coats provide him with a couple of choices of body-moulded depressions in which to sit.

Max eases himself into the driest one, seizes a fresh-looking cigarette pack, crumples it up in disgust when it proves to be empty.

Max lets his muscles relax, lets the tension ooze out of his body. He begins to doze, the distant but all-pervasive sounds of harbour industry fading away to a reassuring croon.

Suddenly Max's eyes snap open. He is not alone in the boat. He sits up abruptly, his eyes straining for focus in the dim light of the boat's scummy hold. Nestled down comfortably in the bum's nest opposite him sits Max's TV set, no longer mutilated or even scarred, but breathing happily, quivering, shuddering as usual. On its screen are the faces of Moses and Raphael, more or less as they were when Max confronted them in the board room.

Max seems almost relieved to see them.

MAX
I knew you'd be back.

MOSES (ON TV)
Oh, Maxie...they took you in. They really took you to the cleaners.
(SHAKES HIS HEAD)
I told you to be careful. You didn't listen.

RAPHAEL (ON TV)
...and Barry Convex is the program director. But at least...at least you're inside Videodrome now...

Raphael dissolves into the screen to join Moses.

MOSES (ON TV)
...and now that you're inside the body of Videodrome, you know what you have to do? You become the cancer...you become the tumour that destroys the body. YOU DESTROY VIDEODROME.

Max, whose arms have been covering his head up to this point, slowly brings them down again until they are resting on his knees. The handgun is pointed at the TV set - and Max is wearing the Accumicon helmet.

On the TV screen, both Raphael and Moses recoil at the sight of the helmet and the handgun. Raphael reaches out his hand as though to cover the screen from the inside - a fruitless gesture.

RAPHAEL
(AFRAID, PLEADING)
Oh, no, Max. Not again. Please...no...

Max snaps down the Accumicon's visor. From his POV, video grid, pulsing LEDs, the figures on the TV screen are twice distanced.

MOSES (ACCUMICON POV)
Don't do it, Max...listen to us...
You must hold on to your humanity.
Listen to us...it will be all you
will have...listen to us...

Although Max's mouth, still visible beneath the Accumicon's visor, is impassive, the helmet itself has begun to breathe, to pant heavily with excitement like an animal anticipating the kill. Max raises the handgun and fires at the TV set.

The TV screen explodes in blood. The TV cabinet jerks to one side with the impact like a gazelle hit with an elephant gun, then begins to shrivel up as though it were burning from the inside out.

The helmet's panting begins to subside, its bloodlust sated. Max, still impassive, slips the gun easily into its berth in his abdomen. When he withdraws his hand it is empty but covered with blood

We end up in a CU of Max in the helmet, visor still down, and DISSOLVE TO

61. EXT. DAY. SHABBY DOWNTOWN STREET. SPECTACULAR OPTICAL STORE

CU Max wearing an outrageous pair of sunglasses - one of the designs he was trying on at the Spec Op showroom.

Max is standing in front of one of Spectacular Optical's downtown stores - a shabby, cutrate store in a shabby, cutrate part of town. The display in the window is covered with two-year old dead flies and the window itself is papered with advice on how to get your glasses paid for by welfare and old age benefit schemes.

But Max is not looking in the window. He is watching the news on a TV set, a black and white portable sitting on an upended packing crate placed on the sidewalk by a derelict. The derelict is sitting beside the crate with an upturned hat in his lap. In the hat are a few coins and cigarettes. A frayed piece of rope joins the derelict's hand to the handle of the TV set. 4/2

The traffic noise makes it impossible to hear the TV set but there are subtitles for the deaf crawling along the bottom of the screen. The picture is a MS of a newscaster, followed by a picture from a gun catalogue of a Walther PPK, followed by a hand-held shot of the outside of the Civic TV building.

The subtitles read: POLICE ARE SEEKING THE PRESIDENT OF THE CIVIC TV CORPORATION IN CONNECTION WITH THE SHOOTING THIS MORNING OF TWO EXECUTIVES OF CHANNEL 83, A SUBSIDIARY OF CIVIC TV. MAX RENN, 38, IS WANTED FOR QUESTIONING IN THE SLAYING OF...

Max doesn't get to see much more of the news. The derelict starts to flap his hat around in front of the screen.

SIDEWALK DERELICT

Hey, Teddy - you want to see the monkey dance, you gotta pay the piper, know what I'm sayin'?

Max levels his impenetrable shades at the man.

MAX

Haven't I seen you at the Cathode Ray Mission?

The derelict gets suddenly very defensive. He switches off the TV set.

SIDEWALK DERELICT

Hey, Teddy, c'mon...I stole the concept. I stole the concept. You know how much my monkey's batteries cost? And they don't last in the cold. The cold knocks 'em right out. I can't dance...you know I would if I could...

Max turns away from the man and enters the store.

62. INT. DAY. SPECTACULAR OPTICAL STORE

This particular branch of Spectacular Optical looks like the drug prescription counter at an all-night drugstore: shopping bag ladies waiting patiently, a bruised wino with broken glasses sitting crookedly on his face, a cop getting his motorcycle shades adjusted.

A lithe Jamaican in his late twenties leaves a pile of cheap vinyl glasses cases he has been organizing and comes over to Max.

BROLLEY

Hi. My name is Brolley. Can I help you?

MAX

I've come to get my glasses adjusted. Is Mr. Convex here today? He said to ask for him. A problem with my prescription. Curvature off-axis or something.

BROLLEY

(LAUGHS)
Better to leave the technical stuff to professionals, now.

Brolley ease Max over to a filing cabinet and starts to riffle through files.

BROLLEY

What's the name?

MAX

Lentz. L-E-N-T-Z.

Brolley's expression clouds over just a touch. He pulls out a file card - too quickly to have really found it. He suddenly seems to be extremely conscious of the cop at the counter behind him.

BROLLEY

(A LITTLE TOO LOUD)
OK. Yes, yes. I have it. Hm. Wow. This is one hell of a script you've got here. You wearin' them now?

MAX

No.

BROLLEY
Very tricky grind here. Can't imagine you'd be seein' things too clear without 'em. C'mon in back.

Brolley gently guides Max through to the back of the store. There, behind a partition which doubles as a notice board, Brolley opens a steel fire door for Max, then follows him through it.

63. INT. DAY. SPECTACULAR OPTICAL STORE. STORE-ROOM

The fire door lurches shut, leaving Brolley and Max in a large, musty store-room crowded with boxes, steel shelves, and a disorganized alcove where customers' frames are adjusted after being plunged into small hot-boxes full of heated sand.

Brolley edges Max into the alcove.

BROLLEY
OK, Mr. Lentz. Where's the weapon?

MAX
What weapon?

BROLLEY
Don't play dumb with me, friend. The gun. The handgun you've been using lately.

MAX
I seem to have misplaced it. It tends to show up when I need it.

BROLLEY
Yeah? That's a good one. Well, let's just see.

Brolley turns Max around and feels under his jacket from behind. It only takes him a few seconds to find what he wants, and he pulls it out with the sound of metal on leather. Max tries to see what it is but the move is too quick.

MAX
(SURPRISED)
What was that you took. My wallet? You want my wallet?

Brolley turns Max around to face him again.He is smiling an obvious, cagey smile.

BROLLEY
Whatever it was, you gonna get it back when you leave. See that door over there?

Max turns to look at the plain steel door at the far end of the store-room.

BROLLEY
Mr. Convex is waitin' for you behind that door. You just knock good 'n loud, then you wait. He'll open up when he's ready. Got it?

Max nods. Brolley pats him on the back, big smile, then disappears back into the store itself.

Max goes up to the door and knocks. There is no response. Max takes off his sunglasses and puts them in his jacket's inside pocket. As he does so, his brow furrows. There is something else in that pocket he didn't expect to find. Max takes out his wallet, turns it over as though it were a dead fish someone put there as a practical joke. If Brolley didn't take his wallet, what did he take? Couldn't have been the handgun - that's safely hidden in his stomach.

Max hears a sound from the shelves behind him. He turns, puts the wallet away, walks cautiously over to the shelves. There, sitting on a waist-level shelf amid boxes of glasses, is his TV set. It is slowly rotating towards him. As its screen comes into view, Max sees that Bianca O'Blivion is now featured on it in a huge CU. Her eyes are liquid and her expression is sad and heavy.

BIANCA (ON TV)
(TO MAX)
Please don't kill me, Max. Please don't. Please don't kill me.

Max backs away, confused. Suddenly, the door opens behind him. He turns. Nicki is standing in the doorway. She is looking at Max with a mixture of awe, fear, and fascination. When she speaks, her voice is strained.

NICKI
(STRAINED)
Didn't mean to keep you waiting, Max. Come on in. We're all anxious to see you.

Max turns back to the shelf. The TV set is gone.

64. INT. DAY. CONVEX'S DOWNTOWN OFFICE

We are close on a TV monitor which is re-playing the murder of Moses and Raphael from Max's POV, complete with Accumicon grid. When we pull back, we find Nicki, Harlan, Convex and Max watching the monitor in Convex's downtown office, which is similar in style to the Spect Op showrooms and very unlike the rest of the downtown store.

Max finds himself unable to watch the murder itself, although he is intrigued to see the handgun whenever it appears in frame. Harlan and Convex are ecstatic. Nicki seems disturbed by it all.

The screen finally smears into static. Harlan switches the monitor off and starts to rewind the cassette.

HARLAN
That was beautiful. That was...astounding.

CONVEX
(CHEERY)
You're weird, Max. Ya know that?

Nicki says nothing. She lowers her eyes when Max looks at her.

MAX
Am I?

HARLAN
Watch it, Barry. When we get to plugging you into this thing, we'll see what you've got sliming around in that brain pan of yours. It's the business-as-usual jocks who are the weird ones.

CONVEX
Maybe so, Harlan. Maybe so.
(TO MAX)
Well? What do you think?

MAX
I'm confused. It's very confusing.

CONVEX
Not really. It's simple. We triggered you off by putting you on our Videodrome set with MS Brand and you hallucinated this entire sequence here. That handgun thing is fantastic. And we were recording it right off the Accumicon's viewer. You're an artist. A Videodrome artist.

MAX
It didn't happen? I didn't kill Moses in the board room?

HARLAN
Max...you were slumped in a chair on the Videodrome set the whole time.

CONVEX
Sure. I mean, when was the last time you saw a weapon like that one?

MAX
It felt real. It felt more real than... than you do right now.

CONVEX
(SERIOUS, PATERNAL)
That's the danger. That's what we're afraid of. We've got to find a way to keep this wonderfully creative hallucinatory world separate and...and safe. Like a writer who knows that what he's writing is stuck on the page, not real life.

Max turns to Nicki. His tone of voice is so earnest that she has to reply without a wisecrack.

MAX
(DEAD SERIOUS)
Nicki? Are you real?

NICKI
(GENERALLY UNCOMFORTABLE)
Yes, I am, Max.

MAX
I want to see Moses and Rafe. And Masha. I think that will help me. If I see that they're alive. Right now, I'm sure that they're dead.

HARLAN
(TO CONVEX)
What do you think?

CONVEX
I dunno. I guess if it were under the right circumstances. If we explained to them what he was going through...without spilling <u>all</u> the beans, of course.

HARLAN
(TO MAX)
I've been trying to cover for you at the office, Max. But I'm afraid if you saw the boys and freaked out... well...you tell me.

MAX
(ALMOST IN TEARS)
Explain it to them. Then let me see them. I want to see them alive.

Harlan gets up and puts his arm around Max. Nicki gets up and walks over to a small bar to pour herself a drink. She too is teary-eyed.

HARLAN
(SOOTHING)
Max...remember you said somebody took your Videodrome tapes? The ones I recorded in the lab? We were in your apartment, Bridey and I, and you said somebody must have taken the tapes from your apartment. A woman. You said, "That bitch took them." Who was that, Max?

MAX
Bianca. Bianca O'Blivion. But she said she didn't take them.

HARLAN
I think she did, though. I think it's a problem, too, because - if she watches them enough - she's going to end up seeing things she might not be able to handle.

MAX
(SIMPLE, CHILDLIKE)
That wouldn't be very good. It's very... uncertain here.

HARLAN
Then maybe you ought to go see her, Max. Go visit Bianca O'Blivion and ask her to return those tapes. For her own good.

MAX
(DAZED)
Yeah. I'd like to see her again. I have trouble functioning on the streets, though. I see things that...distract me.

Harlan easesMax gently out of his chair, stands him up and faces him.

HARLAN
Well, I can fix that. Just open up, open up to me, Max.

Still in a daze, Max pulls open his shirt. The slit is waiting under there, pulsing. Convex watches in fascination. Nicki keeps her face to the wall, nurses her Scotch.

HARLAN
Open all the way up, Max. It'll make it easier that way.

Max reaches down to his slit, digs his fingers into it, pulls it open and holds it there. Beyond the opening of this gash in Max's abdomen we can see intricate folds of raw-looking flesh.

Harlan turns to Convex, who hands him a videocassette he has produced from his pocket. As Harlan turns to Max with the cassette, Max can see that the cassette is soft, breathing.

HARLAN
This'll guide you, Max. This'll take you right there.

Harlan slides the cassette into Max, gently, smoothly. When we tilt up to Max's face, he is wearing the Accumicon helmet with its visor down.

HARLAN
How's that feel?

MAX
Yeah. Yeah. I think that'll take me right there.

Nicki finally turns around to look at Max. From her POV Max is standing in front of Harlan and Convex holding his shirt open. There is no gash in his stomach and no helmet on his head. But his eyes are very bright and he is smiling a terrifying smile.

65. EXT. NIGHT. STREET IN FRONT OF CATHODE RAY MISSION

Max stands in front of the main entrance to the Cathode Ray Mission, reading a sign on the inside of the door window that reads CLOSED FOR ALTERATIONS. There is a padlock on the door and wire mesh on the window. Max adjusts his sunglasses on his nose and walks down the laneway beside the Mission.

66. EXT. NIGHT. ALLEY AT REAR OF CATHODE RAY MISSION

Max snaps open another padlock on the rear door of the Mission using a construction rod as a crowbar. He throws both the rod and the padlock away and jerks the door open on its seized hinges.

67. INT. NIGHT. CATHODE RAY MISSION

Max enters the main hall of the Mission. It is deserted, lit only by spill light from the street outside. The TV sets and the cubicles are all as before, with no signs of work having begun on "alterations."

In the kitchen area, however, there are signs of meals having recently been made and eaten - two plates not cleared away, several cups and glasses partially filled with coffee and apple juice, a few crumpled serviettes - which stand out in the otherwise spotless kitchen.

Max makes his way to the stairs leading to O'Blivion's office. The door at the top of the stairs is open and lights are on somewhere beyond it. Max goes up the stairs.

68. INT. NIGHT. O'BLIVION'S OFFICE

Max enters O'Blivion's office. Except for signs that the office is being lived in - an old springy cot set up in one corner, a newspaper spread out on the floor - the office is basically as Max remembers it.

As Max approaches the centre of the room he sees that the door behind the desk, the door to the video library, is open. Max stops. He can hear someone stirring around inside the library.

58. INT. MISSION

Max is in. Mission is deserted. TV sets and cubicles all there as before, cafeteria line etc. Dark. Signs of recent eating.

Max makes his way upstairs to office door. Door is unlocked. Max goes in.

59. INT. OFFICE

Office is dark. Mattress on floor or old springy cot. Place is being lived in. Door to video library is open. MMMMMMMMM

Somebody stirring around. Max waits outside. His helmet comes on.Pants in anticip
He withdraws his handgun from his slit. Somebody comes out.
Max grabs him. He turns, terrified. It's Shinji.

SHINJI
GASP. No. Please. Not you. Not you.

Max lowers his gun, slips it away. Helmet gone.

MAX
Shinji. What are you doing here?

SHINJI
I'm hiding. From you, Max.

MAX
From me? Why?

SHINJI
You are an assassin now. For Videodrome.

MAX
No. No I'm not.

SHINJI
Oh yes. You have killed three now.
I am to mhè four. Bianca will be five.

MAX
~~I haven't killed anyone~~Shinji...where is
Masha? Masha Borowczyk. I want to see her.
MMMMM
I want to talk to her.

SHINJI
MMMMMM My friend...you are insane.

MAX
(GRABS HIM) Tell me where she isM.

SHINJI
She is undoubdtedly in heaven.

MAX
She's not dead.

SHINJI
She is. I saw her body. I identified her. In her hotel room. When you shot your two colleagues I knew it had been you who killed her.

MAX
(BACKING AWAY)
You are a hallucination. You are not real.

Bianca smashes Max over the head with something and he goes out.
DISSOLVE IN TO

Max wakes up sitting in cahir. Bianca and Shinji face him. [redacted]TV set sits between them, Max's.

[redacted]

[redacted]

BIANCA
You came for the tapes? The VD tapes I took from you?

MAX
Yes.

BIANCA
What else?

MAX
Nothing.

BIANCA
To kill me.

MAX
Why would I do that?

BIANCA
Convex wants me dead. I know too much. My father worked for them and then turned against them. They killed him.

MAX
Nobody's dead.

BIANCA
They can program you now, Max. They can play you like a videotape recorder. They can make you do what they want. You came here to kill me.

SHINJI
That's what VD really is. They can destroy you through your TV set. Give you brain cancer. Or make you crazy. Or make you kill.

BIANCA
They're going to start soon. Soon civic TV will be showing VD regularly. The ones who watch it are the ones who will be destroyed.

MAX
I want to get out of this.

MAX
No.

BIANCA
I'll prove it to you.

MAX
Yeah. Yeah. OK. Prove it to me.

BIANCA
Give me your tape. (MAX'S EYES DART AROUND) You know...the one they plugged into you. Into your guts.

MAX
You want that tape?

BIANCA
Yes. I do.

Max opens his shi

MAX
How do you know about that tape?

BIANCA
My father designed your new world Max. ~~He designed~~ He believed that TV was an extension of the human body. He designed the format of VD hallucinations. I helped him. I know how to function in your delerium.

MAX
You really want that tape?

BIANCA
Yes. I do.

Max opens his shirt. Reaches in, takes out tape. Shinji takes it and plugs it into TV set.

~~MAX~~
~~How can you be doing that? It's not real, you know.~~

BIANCA
This is what they wanted ~~[illegible]~~ to happen.

On the TV set, scene of Max ~~[illegible]~~ strangling Bianca. Maybe taking a cord out of his guts and doing it. With helemt.

Max starts to laugh.

SHINJI
What's funny?

MAX
You can't trust that TV set, you know. It lies.

BIANCA
No. It's the helmet that lies. When you realize you're wearing it, that's when they're controlling you.

Max is wearing the helmet.

MAX
But there's another tape, another one you really should see.

BIANCA
Yes? Show us.

Max reaches into his slit. Shinji stands up, suddenly afraid.

SHINJI
Bianca...No!

Max pulls out his gun and shoots them both. Then he goes into the library and starts ripping the place apart.

61. HARBOUR. OLD BOAT.

Max walks along harbour, gets to Condemned by Harbour Police boat. Slips in. Holding package of four or five tapes.

62. INT. BOAT

Max has made a little bum's nest in the hold. He gets in there, starts to eat salmon out of a can. He is cold and emotionless - not arrogant or aloof, just nothing.

Suddenly, his TV set appears in a grungy corner. It has a fleshy slit in its screen, just like his.

Max gets up, plugs in a VD cassette. Max goes and sits down. The VD title comes up. Max continues eating.

On the screen, Max appears.

MAX ON TV
You're dead now, Max. As dead as any of the others. Do you like being dead?

Max stops eating, puts down the tin.

MAX ON TV
I'm the real Max Renn now. I'm the human being, the one with the passion to live, to evolve, to make things happen. I'm Max Renn in the flesh, and you're an image on a cathode ray tube, a mosaic of elctrons dancing to the tune of a mag tape. How did I get in here? How can I get out? Electron slaves dancing to the crack of the VD electron gun. Death to VD. Death to VD, and life to Max Renn.

Max reaches into his slit, tilt up (in same shot) and now Max wears the helemtM He points it at the TV set. Mirror image points back. TV set screen goes fleshy slit, hand with gun comes out. Max shakes, sweats. Fires. TV gun fires back, tumours cover helmet, dissolve it. Max's faces appears, sobbing.

MAX
I am the video word made flesh.

paraphrase

Back to TV set. All the faces dissolve from one to the other. Masha, O'B, Bianca, Moses, Shinji, Rafe. They all say, one after another:

THE DEAD ON TV
Death to Videodrome. Long live the new flesh. (?)

From Max's face HISSOLVE TO

63. STREET OUTSIDE SPECT. OP

CU Max's Spect. Op. sunglasses. Max goes in.

64. INT. SPECT. OP

Brolley looks up. More respect on his face.

BROLLEY
Those glasses still not exactly right, Mr. Lentz?

MAX
They're not right, no.

BROLLEY
Well, I guess Mr. Convex will have to take another look at them.

Brolley takes him through the back.

65, THE BACK

Brolley stops him, as usual, for a frisk.

BROLLEY
I'll have to frisk you again, Mr. Lentz.

Max opens his shirt. The slit is there.

MAX
It's in there. The handgun.

Brolley backs away a bit.

BROLLEY
In where? Don't try to weird me out my friend. I'm dangerous too.

MAX
(LOOKS DOWN. SLIT IS THERE)
You don't see anything there?

BROLLEY
I see your belly button, man. What you want me to do? Push it? Push the button? (FORCED LAUGH)

MAX
I keep my weapons inside. I've got them all inside. A whole arsenal. Safer that way. Nobody knows they're there.

BROLLEY
(CAGEY)
Then why you tellin' me?

MAX
Trying to help you. You sure you don't see the door to the arsenal?

Broley looks again. Slit is pulsing. Brolley's flesh creeps.

BROLLEY
Shit, man. What's that? Appendix scar? Where'd that come from?

MAX
(SMILES)
You see it now? The cut there?

BROLLEY
Yeah, I see it now. What happened?

Max reaches in, Brolley's eyes go wide, Max pulls out gun.

MAX
Videodrome happened.

Brolley recils in revulsion. Pulls his own gun. Too late. Max shoots him. He goes down, tumours. Max turns and goes to door. Knocks. Door opens. Harlan. Smiles but wary. Lets Max in, doesn't see corpse.

65. INT. SPECT OP CONVEX OFFICE

Door closes. Harlan's alone.

MAX
Where's Convex?

HARLAN
He's at the factory.

MAX
The one in Pittsburgh?

HARLAN

(LAUGHS)
It's right here in town, Max. The limo took you in circles. It's in the phone book.

MAX
I've reacted well, though, haven't i?

HARLAN
(SMILES)
Did you see Bianca O'B? Did you get the tapes?

MAX
I saw her.

H
Did she...give you any trouble?

M
No.

H
Well... (AWKWARD SILENCE)
Where are the tapes?

M
I hid them.
OPENS UP. H RECOILS
In there.

H
God...Max. What have you done to yourself?

M
You haven't seen this before?

H
You hallucinated some kind of slit in your guts. I played along...That's how we related to you. Play along with your visions.

M
MAX
But you see it now, don't you? It's real even for you now.

H
You've been mutilating yourself. You've sliced yourself open...

MAX
No, no. It's part of my body. Long live the new flesh.

H
Where are the tapes, Max? I want them.

MAX
I told you. They're in here.

H
I want them.

M
OPENS UP. GUTS DON'T FALL OUT. H IS ASTONISHED
Take them.

H
Max...

M
What's wrong? Can't you just take them?

H
ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE
Yeah. I guess I can.

H reaches in. Thing closes around his wrist. Can't pull out.

M
You see? My world ~~is~~ dreaming the real world. It's much closer to the truth!

M
~~What's going on Max, don't. Without us~~

Harlan screams, tries to pull out, hand like it's being ground up inside. Finally he pulls free of Max, looks down at his hand. It has become a grenade. A hand grenade potato masher.He backs away whirls around tries to shake it off. It explodes. He disappears in the blast. When the smoke clears, theres a hole in the wall leading to the outside. Max steps out through it.

66. EXT. STREET ALLEY WAY OUT BACK
People gather at blast hole out back. Smoke pours out. Max walks calmly away.

67. SPECT. OP FACTORY

Max arrives by cab or by bus. Probably cab. A lot of cars, limos. Action happening. Max walks calmly through it, glowing, assured, looking good. Nods to some people. NO - EVERYBODY ALREADY INSIDE.

Up the stairs, stopped at the door - no slips in through the door with a group.

68. INT. LOBBY

~~But inside the lobby people are lining up to filter through a little gate where IDs are being checked.~~

Signs saying WELCOME SPECT OP . Everybody's alrady in.

Max hustles by lady at door.

LADY
~~You haven't missed much~~The big show's almost over.

Max nods, goes through.

69. SPECT OP AUDITORIUM

Max enters. A large crowd watching slides of glasses frames. Streamers and banners everywhere. Love and Eyes. Love comes through the eyes, etc.

as slogan

APPLAUSE. There's a band, singing. Then Convex comes on. MC intros him.

MC
And now, a man who needs no introduction...

then walks away without a word. Everybody laughs.

CONVEX
I'm Barry Convex.
(APPLAUSE
I invite you all to our lens concours in the main hall, where our lovely models - of both sexes (Laughs) will be happy to show your our sparkling new spring line. I'm really no good at this, but I'll be happy to talk to you in more intimate surroundings.

Band goes crazy. Max eases himself out the door.

70. MAIN HALL

Line up of models and glasses and pamphlets. Back lit are factory stills, lens grinding techniques etc. Lots more Love and eyes logos. Max is first out.

Drifts along. Past a TV set - Max's. It breathes, it has a helmet on its screen. A bunch of people notice it. Hey, what a gimmick. ETC. MAx smiles.

FEMALE MODEL ONE

Something you'd like to see? This is sensational, don't you think?

Max walks along, they all whip on their favourites.

Then ~~mmm~~ the auditorium crowd comes pouring out, grabbing hors d'oeuvres, checking out models, drinking. Max watches. Then suddenly they turn and applaud. Convex comes out the other way. Toasts them with a drink.

People crowd around him, shake his hand, pat him on the back. Good natured joking. Suddenly Convex looks up. He goes pale.

Everboy turns to see what he sees. Max is there, wearing his helemt Now its blended into his skull more., flesh coloured.

People don't know how to react. One guy says, Hey I like it, but it's a bit bulky for summer. Laughter. Convex doesn't laugh.

Max raises his gun.

MAX

Death to Videodrome. Long live the new flesh.

He shoots Convex. People go nuts. Max, now without helmet, slips through cwowd and out.

71. CRAM RADIO. EXT. NIGHT. STREET.

Nicki comes down the steps, says goodnight to the security man. She's in a hurry. Max comes out of the shadows. She stops.

NICKI

Max...I knew you'd come. I heard about Convex from the news room. The reports of his death are very... confused.

MAX

Come for a walk.

She starts off with him.

NICKI

Are you going to kill me too?

Max is silent.

NICKI
What have you become?

MAX (SMILES)
I'm the new spring line.

Nicki smiles. She throws back her head and laughs. What has she got to lose?

72. HARBOUR. EST. SHOT OF OLD BOAT

Move around to water side, move in. Flickering light of a TV setup.

73. BOAT. INT. Has the inerior changed?

Nicki is watching the breathing TV set. She has the helmet on.(?) 4/2
On the TV screen is a weird 3D organ, moving. translucent. Innerlit.

After a bunch of this, she gets up and goes to the next compartment where Max is lying quietly. She sits down next to him.

NICKI
I see what you mean.

They begin to fool around. He takes off her top. Slips his hand down into - two pockets in M flesh of her back. She slips her hand into his stomach slit. They kiss. His hands come out of the slits in her back. They are weird organs.

Her hand comes out of his stomach slit. It is a weird reciprocal organ. The three hands entwine - His two take her one. Strange fluids gush everywhere, pumping out all over them. Nicki smiles at Max.

NICKI
I see what you mean.

Max laughs. They hold this fountain of their hands above their heads. It pours and bubbles all over them.

In the other room, MM Max's TV set breathes. We dolly into the screen slit. MM engulfs the camera in darkness.
It opens as we approach and
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